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Turkey, U.S. to hold talks on northern Iraq

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish and U.S. officials are to hold talks in Washington next week on the future of northern Iraq, which has been controlled by rival Kurdish groups since the 1991 Gulf war, Ankara said Wednesday. Foreign ministry spokesman Omer Akbel said a delegation led by Ali Tuygan, a senior official in the department, would meet U.S. officials on Jan. 8 and 9 to exchange views on the situation in northern Iraq. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), led by Massud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of Jalal Talabani have fought for control of northern Iraq in a conflict which has left more than 2,000 dead since May 1994. The United States, working with Turkey, is trying to reconcile the two factions, which signed agreements in principle in August and September in Ireland to begin talks aimed at resolving their differences. Turkey has repeatedly expressed concern about the security of its border with northern Iraq, which is used as a rear base by Turkish Kurds fighting to create their own state in southeast Turkey.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Royal Jordanian has the pleasure to announce that its new Information Center at QAIA is now operational 24 hours a day.

Any information concerning the movement of its fleet to and from Amman could be obtained through Tel # 08/53200

ROYAL JORDANIAN الملكية الأردنية

Saudi FM to visit Tuesday

AMMAN (AFP) — Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal will next week embark on his first high-level mission to Jordan since relations were damaged by the 1990 Gulf crisis, Jordanian officials said Wednesday. The visit next Tuesday and Wednesday will allow the two countries to finally normalise their relations, which were strained when Saudi Arabia accused Jordan of supporting Iraq after Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait, the officials said. The two countries began mending ties in mid-1995, when Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti made two trips to Riyadh. The announcement of the Saudi foreign minister's trip follows King Fahd's decision on Monday to hand over the running of the country to his half-brother, Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz.

Egypt dismantles Israeli 'espionage ring'

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt has dismantled an espionage ring which it says was being used by Israel's Mossad security agency to spy on the country, a newspaper said Wednesday. The alleged head of the ring was Amer Salman, an Egyptian from the Sinai town of Al Arish, said the Arab daily Al Hayat, quoting "well informed Egyptian sources." Mr. Salman was arrested along with a number of his collaborators, according to the London-based newspaper. It said Mr. Salman "admitted to belonging to a network that worked for Israel "and said he had established "contacts with Mossad agents and provided them with strategic information." In exchange, "the Israelis allowed him to smuggle a large amount of drugs into Egypt through the Israel border," Al Hayat said. Mr. Salman said information provided to Israel included "Egyptian activities in the Sinai as well as Egypt's intentions concerning its commitments to respect the peace treaty signed with Israel" in 1979, the paper reported. He also received "precise instructions and training on espionage operations," it said. Mossad provided Mr. Salman a transmission device with a special code to exchange messages with Israel, the paper added.

Israel frees 5 Lebanese prisoners

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (AFP) — Israel released five Lebanese prisoners on Wednesday from Khayam prison in its self-declared security zone in South Lebanon, the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia said. The four men and a woman were freed from the jail, which houses 250 mostly Lebanese prisoners, to mark the new year, an SLA source said. An AFP correspondent reported that they headed towards their home villages in the occupied border strip. Three months ago the SLA authorised the International Red Cross to visit prisoners at Khayam after human rights organisations denounced conditions at the jail, built in 1984.

Israel seeks candidate for Oman post

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's foreign ministry said Wednesday that it had issued a call for applicants to take up a diplomatic post in the Gulf state of Oman, which does not yet have diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. A ministry spokesman said foreign service candidates were being sought for "an Israeli representation office in Muscat." No date for the posting was mentioned. Omani Foreign Minister Yousef Ben Alawi Abdullah said last week in Cairo that Israel and Oman had agreed to open official trade offices in each other's capitals and that the Israeli bureau would begin operations in January. It will be the first official Israeli presence in a Gulf state.

Syria, Israel resume talks

Current round expected to produce agenda

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — After a four-day break, peace negotiations between Israel and Syria resumed Wednesday at a secluded conference centre outside the U.S. capital.

The discussions, in which U.S. officials are participating, mark the first face-to-face dialogue between Israeli and Syrian officials in six months.

Talks began again after the participants lunched together, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

The same negotiators who met Dec. 27-29 at the Wye Plantation on the Maryland coast in the highly secretive talks were due to continue them until early afternoon Friday.

During the intermission, the U.S. government had "informal consultations" with both negotiating teams, the State Department said.

U.S. Middle East peace envoy Dennis Ross met Tuesday with Israeli negotiators at the Washington hotel where they were staying. Over the weekend he held informal discussions with the Israeli and Syrian delegates.

The State Department said the news blackout would remain in force this week at the 18th century plantation, an hour's drive from Washington, as officials sought to maintain a delicate diplomatic balance.

None of the sides expect a rapid breakthrough in this round of talks, which centre on the return to Syria of the Golan Heights, the strategic plateau seized by the Israeli army in 1967.

Mr. Burns confirmed that Secretary of State Warren Christopher would travel to the Middle East on Jan. 10 to meet officials from both countries. First he will stopover in Paris on Jan. 8-9 for a conference on international aid to the Palestinians.

The most that is expected from this session is an agenda for further discussions.

In Tel Aviv Foreign Minister Ehud Barak said Wednesday that Israel did not expect the current round of talks with Syria to result in a declaration of principles.

"My feeling is that it is too early," Mr. Barak told the Associated Press, suggesting the two sides would not be ready to draft an understanding until they worked out a definition of peace.

"There is a need to look further into the meaning of peace and the nature of normalisation, what it means to establish relations."

But Uri Savir, Israel's top negotiator, told Israel's army radio Wednesday that the sides might issue a joint statement at the end of this round "if there is a common basis."

"What is important is to make progress and to protect the interests of the state in such an agreement, which will also, I hope, bring an end to conflict in the region," added Mr. Savir, who is director-general of Israel's

(Continued on page 7)

Palestinian election campaign in full swing

Human rights activist detained

EAST JERUSALEM (Agencies) — The Palestinian election campaign got into full swing Wednesday but was immediately marred by reports that a leading human rights campaigner had been arrested by the security forces of Yasser Arafat.

Following the formal kick-off of the campaign by Mr. Arafat on Tuesday, the nearly 700 candidates seeking seats in the new Palestinian autonomy council headed into their constituencies Wednesday in search of votes.

Less than 24 hours after the campaign was declared open by the Central Election Commission, streets and towns across the West Bank and Gaza Strip were plastered with candidates' portraits, banners and penants.

More than a million voters are signed up for the Jan. 20 polls to choose 88 representatives to the self-rule council and a president — with Mr. Arafat virtually assured of victory over his sole rival, Samiha Khalil, a 72-year-old grandmother and opponent of the peace accords with Israel.

The start of the historic campaign was marred, however, when the civil liberties movement B'tselem and media watchdog Reporters Without Borders announced that one of their main field-workers had been arrested by agents of Force 17, an elite Palestinian unit charged with Mr. Arafat's personal security.

They said Bassem Eid was taken from his home in Israeli-controlled East Jerusalem late Tuesday to the autonomous West Bank town of Ramallah in violation of Israeli-Palestinian autonomy agreements.

There was no official confirmation of his arrest from either Palestinian or Israeli police.

"A strong suspicion exists that Eid was arrested because of the harsh criticism he has voiced in his work... concerning the actions of the Palestinian (National) Authority (PNA)," B'tselem said.

Earlier this week European and U.S. observers monitoring the Jan. 20 vote for a Palestinian autonomy council and president expressed concern about signs that the PNA was seeking to muzzle opponents in the runup to the polls.

Of the 700 candidates registered to run in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip, some 500 are independents, many of them

(Continued on page 7)

Ganzoury names cabinet, retains Musa, Alfi, Tantawi

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt's new prime minister on Wednesday named a cabinet that leaves in place the most powerful ministers — defence, interior and foreign affairs — after getting approval from President Hosni Mubarak.

Kamal Al Ganzoury told reporters he would name seven to nine new ministers after a one-hour meeting with Mr. Mubarak. But he refused to give details until he make an official announcement later at cabinet headquarters.

Mr. Al Ganzoury, a 62-year-old economist, also said he expected to make some changes in ministries concerned with economics. He made clear after he was appointed Tuesday that his main task will be to deal with Egypt's ailing economy.

He told reporters he would not be changing defence minister Hussein Tantawi, Foreign Minister Amr Musa or Interior Minister Hassan Al Alfi, who has led the fight against Islamic extremists trying to topple Mr. Mubarak's government.

Mr. Al Ganzoury replaces Atef Sedki, who served almost 10 years, more than any other Egyptian prime minister. Mr. Mubarak has appointed Mr. Sedki to head a council planning for the future.

The cabinet shift follows increasing anger at the government over parliament elections won overwhelmingly by Mr. Mubarak's National Democratic Party. Opposition parties and human rights groups complained the government triumphed through widespread fraud.

The move came as a surprise since Mr. Mubarak said after the elections that he saw no need for major changes in the government, given the overwhelming victory by his party.

However, diplomatic sources, who asked not to be identified, said Mr. Mubarak was upset at the growing anger over the elections and decided to use it as a reason to make changes.

In his speech last month opening the new parliament, Mr. Mubarak concentrated on state efforts to defeat Muslim extremists and improve the economy.

He suggested Tuesday night after appointing Mr. Al Ganzoury that the pace of economic reform had been too slow and called for increasing it as long as it did not hurt Egypt's poor.

A major complaint about the economic reforms has been that Egypt has not sold off hundreds of state-owned companies. But officials have said they were being cautious not to increase unemployment, already estimated at more than 20 per cent.

While the cabinet reshuffle was meant to quiet complaints about the ailing economy and charges of election fraud, it brought only more criticism from the opposition.

"It is an attempt to make people talk about something new while forgetting the main issue — that we have a forged parliament which came through rigging and should be dissolved," said Adel Hussein of the Islamic-oriented Labour Party.

"They have changed faces while they should change their harmful policies," he added.

An editorial from the newspaper of the Wafd party, a right-of-centre opposition group, predicted most Egyptians would be unhappy because they had wanted "real and genuine change" in the government.

"If this change is only for change, then people will most certainly be disappointed," it said.

Mamoun Hodeiby, spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood, said the cabinet shuffle would make little difference.

"It is meaningless because real power and policy making is in the hands of the president," Mr. Hodeiby said.

His Majesty King Hussein and Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday greet members of the committees that took part in the preparations for the country's celebration of the King's 60th birthday in November (Petra photo)

King honours celebrations committee

AMMAN (Petra) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor Wednesday attended a lunch hosted by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker at the King Hussein Youth City in honour of the members of an educational committee which organised a Jordan musical play as part of the country's celebrations of King Hussein's 60th birthday. Also honoured were a number of officials from the Greater Amman Municipality who took part in preparations for the celebrations. Present at the lunch were Their Royal Highnesses Princes Hamzeh and Ali, Chief of the Royal Court Marwan Al Qasem, His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, the King's secretary for cultural affairs, Prince Ali Ben Nayef, the King's private secretary, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh and other officials. The higher committee which was in charge of the overall celebrations for the King's birthday was chaired by the prime minister and groups the chief of the Royal Court, several ministers and members of Parliament as well as Amman mayor, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff and the director of the Public Security Department.

Deputies criticise draft budget, admit no magic solution to poverty

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Lawmakers escalated their criticism of the 1996 draft budget on Wednesday although they said they knew that ready-made solutions to poverty and unemployment and radical change to the government's policies could not be realised overnight. But, to many members of the Lower House of Parliament, it was a chance to remind the government of what they described as injustices, nepotism and most particularly the worsening economic conditions.

The government, which will make its reply to the deputies' speeches today, is expected to respond to some of their demands, especially in terms of an increase in civil servants' salaries. In its draft budget report, the government had already promised an increase of JD 10 to government employees as of May 1.

But "this is not enough," protested many of the deputies on Wednesday's marathon debate over the budget proposal that started on Tuesday and will end today. They were quick to point out the price hikes of more than 70 commodities, a 15 per cent rate of unemployment, recent taxes and the increasing level of poverty in the Kingdom.

"The assurances given in the draft budget went hand in hand with the people's aspirations," said Deputy Abdul Hadi Majali, spokesperson of the National Action Front bloc in the Parliament. "But if the figures of prices, unemployment or poverty (as provided by the government) show an improvement that is not felt by the people then there must be something wrong with the figures themselves." Apparently they "do not reflect the truth as it is," Mr. Majali whose bloc occupies six seats in the Cabinet said.

In a petition presented to the government on Wednesday, 43 deputies called for a JD 15 increase instead of the envisaged JD 10 increase in civil servants' salaries. Other deputies said that a less than JD 20 increase was not enough to meet what they described as the crazy price hikes. Others went further and demanded a minimum of JD 25.

But all deputies, however, insisted that the increase should be effective as of the beginning of the year and not the 1st of May as the government promised.

Meanwhile, some deputies strongly criticised the recommendations of the Finance Committee that call for lifting subsidies on bread and warned against such an action.

"It is the poor people who will be affected by such a measure," said independent Islamist Abdul Razzaq Tubeishat. "It is not a pragmatic solution."

In its report, the Finance Committee proposed that the price of bread be "changed" and that the government compensate poor families in cash. The report said it was one of the means to reduce government spending and budget deficit.

Islamic Action Front Deputy Abdul Mun'em Abu Zant strongly criticised the recommendation and described it as "scheming" against the poor.

"The idea of financial compensation is only a ploy to fool the people," he said. "If the government compensated the poor for one month it will not continue the next month. We have experienced the government's promises" and we should not take risks.

Centrist Deputy Fawwaz Zoubi also complained of rising prices and what he saw as the government's indifference to the people's needs.

"Have we ever thought about what the citizen really needs? Have we thought about the accumulated frustration due to the exaggerated

(Continued on page 7)

Ali vows Yemen will not surrender 'legal rights' to Hanish island

SANAA (R) — Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh said on Wednesday his country would not give up what he called its legal right over a Red Sea island but would work to prevent a row between Yemen and Eritrea from endangering shipping.

"Yemen will continue to stick to its legal sovereignty rights over the Greater Hanish (island)," he told the SABA news agency.

"Yemen will continue calling for a peaceful settlement of the dispute out of its feeling of responsibility and keenness to avoid any tension in the Red Sea region threatening the security and safety of international navigation," he said.

Yemen and Eritrea both claim sovereignty over Red Sea islands including Greater Hanish, where at least 12 people died in fighting between the two countries last month.

Mr. Saleh on Wednesday met Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin, who presented Yemen with a settlement proposal with the views of both sides, the official SABA said.

"What we found from the Yemeni side was very encouraging," said Mr. Mesfin whose country is seeking to mediate in the row.

He said he was confident of a similar response from Eritrea but didn't elaborate on the contents of the proposed agreement before leaving Sanaa after a one-day visit.

An official said it was a blueprint of principles on how to solve the dispute. Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Iryani said it would be referred to constitutional bodies.

Diplomats had said Mr. Mesfin would try to prevent the dispute from spilling over to threaten the vital shipping region. Oil and tourism appear to be at the heart of the dispute.

Ethiopia had earlier proposed that Yemeni prisoners be handed over to the Red cross, that both sides pull out from the islands and the issue be referred to the International Court of Justice in the Hague.

Yemen, a small and independent oil producer, insists that talks on defining sea borders between the two countries, facing each other across the Red Sea, could start only after the withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Greater Hanish island.

Eritrean President Issayas Afewerki was reported to have described this demand on Tuesday as unacceptable to Asmara.

U.S. defence chief to visit Sunday

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — U.S. Secretary of Defence William Perry is expected here Sunday in a two-day visit to the Kingdom where he will hold talks with His Majesty King Hussein and senior officials on U.S. military assistance to Jordan, a U.S. embassy spokesman said Wednesday.

"Mr. Perry will hold high level talks with King Hussein and the prime minister on military assistance to Jordan," the spokesman, who asked not to be named, said.

He added that no information was available on whether the two sides would sign military accords during Mr. Perry's short visit to the Kingdom. The Pentagon chief is also expected to meet with senior army officers.

Mr. Perry, who will arrive from Saudi Arabia, Monday started an eight countries tour in Europe and the Middle East that would take him to Italy, Hungary, Bosnia (where he would inspect U.S. troops), the Ukraine, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel.

Jordanian officials were quoted in the local press as saying that during Mr. Perry's visit, Jordan will seek the modernisation of the army and its equipment especially the air force's.

On December, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said in an Aqaba press conference that the U.S. was "determined to do whatever" it can "to support Jordan because it is in (U.S.) national interest." He added that the military assistance to Jordan would come in the form of equipment drawn from U.S. stocks in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Talks over displaced Palestinians start in Haifa

HAIFA, Israel (AFP) — Israeli and Arab officials resumed talks here Wednesday on the future of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced during the 1967 Middle East war.

Delegations representing Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt and Jordan opened their sixth round of talks on the issue since their quadripartite commission was created in March under the terms of the 1993 autonomy accord between Israel and the PLO.

Earlier rounds of talks in Cairo, Amman and Gaza City all failed to resolve the issue of how many displaced Palestinians have the right to return to their former homes.

The head of the Palestinian delegation, Zohdi Said, said the two-day talks here could be "decisive."

"I hope that the commission will be able to accomplish its mission and allow the return of the refugees to their homes," he said.

The United Nations has estimated the number of Palestinians displaced by the 1967 war at 350,000, while Israel puts the figure at 200,000 and the Palestinian Authority at 1.5 million.

The current negotiations do not take into account Palestinians made refugees during the 1948 Israeli-Arab war. Their fate will be discussed when talks on the "final status" negotiations between Israel and the PLO due to start in May.

هكذا من الأصل

Israel rejects blanket compensation for Arabs

JERUSALEM (R) — Israeli leaders decided on Wednesday against blanket compensation for Arabs claiming damages over Israeli army actions during the Palestinian uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, officials said.

A cabinet minister had estimated Israel could face claims running into the hundreds of millions of dollars in connection with the "intifada" which began in 1987 and died down after the Israeli-PLO peace deal in 1993.

Government officials said Prime Minister Shimon Peres and the ministers of justice and finance met to discuss the issue and decided legislation should be proposed in parliament giving the state blanket immunity to the claims.

But they accepted a compromise proposal by Justice Minister David Libai for the establishment of a special committee to deal with "exceptional cases", said the officials, who declined to be identified.

Israelis killed 1,206 Palestinians from the start of the uprising until the end of 1993, according to records kept by the Israeli human rights group B'tselem. Palestinians killed 179 Israelis in that period.

Thousands of Arabs and hundreds of Jews were injured.

Mr. Peres had made clear in a statement earlier this week he opposed paying money to every Palestinian who suffered damage to property or personal injury as a result of the army's response to "acts of war" against Israel.

But Leah Tsemel, an Israeli lawyer who represents several Arab claimants, said "serious travesties" had been committed against Palestinians, beyond what courts would consider as legal armed response by soldiers or police to anti-Israeli violence.

"I regard (the ministers' decision) as completely negative," she told Reuters.

Army radio quoted Mr. Peres as saying at Wednesday's meeting: "Each side has to handle his own damages. We had some of our own: We had to compensate our own bereaved families and Israelis who were injured (by Palestinians)."

The radio said Mr. Libai raised the idea of compensation in "exceptional cases" after Attorney-General Michael Ben-Yair warned the ministers that total rejection of payments would not withstand a court challenge.

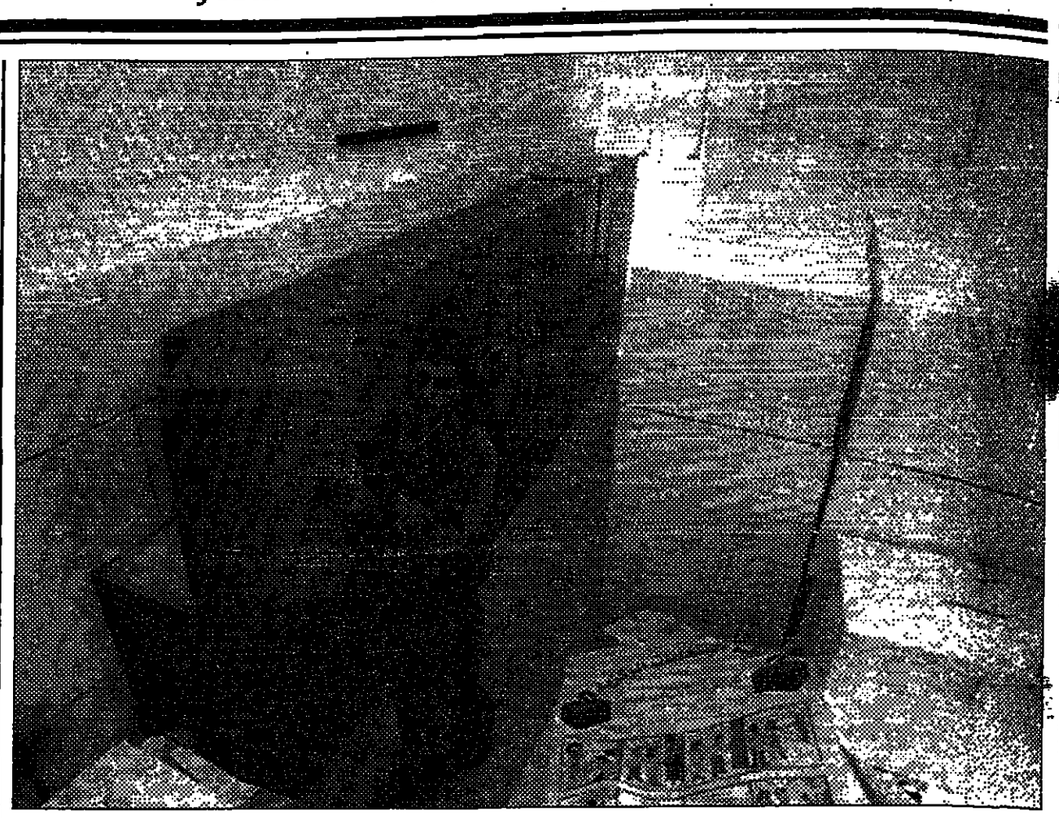
The full cabinet will discuss the compensation issue in the near future before legislation is presented to parliament, the officials said.

In an editorial opposing payouts, Israel's Maariv newspaper, a popular tabloid, said: "Israel would be the first country in history to pay compensation to those who rose up against it".

But the matter has gained steam among Palestinians now that Israel has ended its occupation of seven West Bank towns. During the intifada, many Palestinians had viewed compensation claims as demeaning to their struggle against occupation.

A cartoon in the Palestinian newspaper Al Hayat Al Jadida on Wednesday showed attitudes had changed.

It depicted Mr. Peres sitting on a fat money bag labelled "compensation for Jews from the world for crimes committed against them". He is holding a sign that says: "No compensation for Palestinians."



Khaled Hussein Musafer, a worker in the printing section of the Palestinian Central Election Commission, Wednesday shows a red election ballot box stored in a room along with hundreds of other election ballot boxes, all of which will be distributed to polling stations and used in the historic Jan. 20 Palestinian elections. There will be two sets of ballot boxes; red for election of the president and white for the election of the Palestinian National Council. There will be some 1,500 polling stations (Reuters photo)

20 killed in first Kabul rocket attack of year

KABUL (AFP) — Twenty civilians, including five children, were killed and 48 injured in the first rocket attack of 1996 on the besieged Afghan capital, witnesses and hospital staff said Wednesday.

Ten of the victims died instantly when a hail of rockets struck the southern Kabul suburb of Karte Seh late Tuesday, while the remaining 10 died on the way to hospital or after admission, they said.

The salvo of about 20 rockets, which the government said was fired by the Taliban militia, struck a busy bazaar area claiming more victims than any similar attack here in recent months, locals said.

The barrage struck two tailors' shops, a private home and bustling market streets, showering the area with deadly shards of twisted aluminium which sliced into stall holders and passers-by.

"I was standing behind a wall when the rockets started landing all around the area. When it ended, I saw bodies everywhere and the wounded were moaning and crying," local resident Mohammad Arif told AFP.

Among the dead was a mother, her woman friend and her two young children who were killed when one of the Soviet-built BM 21 rockets struck their small home near the market, locals said.

A one-year-old baby and a six-year old girl were killed in the bazaar — along with six other people including a tailor — while a fifth toddler died of his wounds later in one of Kabul's hospitals.

"We had to bury almost a whole family including the two small children," said one of the witnesses to the rocket strike.

A total of 28 victims of the barrage were still in hospital Wednesday, including three children who received serious wounds when their mother was killed, Dr. Mazia of a nearby hospital said.

Pools of congealed blood which had seeped into the dusty earth still marked the scene of the market-place carnage early Wednesday.

Government officials blamed the attack on the Islamic Taliban who have been encamped around Kabul for nearly three months, saying state forces had later launched a retaliatory attack south of the city.

"We launched an attack on the Taliban after we noticed unusual movements of soldiers and tanks and following the deliberate rocketing by them of residential areas of Kabul," a defence ministry source said.

He said the two forces exchanged heavy volleys of artillery, rocket and missile fire for two hours on one of Kabul's three frontlines at Rishkor, but added that no ground had been won by either side.

No independent confirmation was immediately available here of who carried out the rocket attack. A fresh rocket salvo early Wednesday injured another two civilians in central Kabul, doctors said.

Kabul has come under almost daily rocket and artillery barrages over recent months which have claimed scores of lives, including 31 since the government proposed peace talks with the other warring factions a week ago.

In an unprecedented move, Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani offered to travel to the provincial strongholds of all the combatants here, including the Taliban, for talks on establishing a new broad-based administration.

The Taliban at first rejected the offer, but have since softened their stance saying they would be prepared in principle to consider talks.

The Taliban, who sprung up from the Koranic schools of Pakistan a year ago, have vowed to seize Kabul and topple the government.

Iraqi opposition says it killed general

NICOSIA (R) — Iraqi opposition forces said on Tuesday that they had killed an Iraqi general in an ambush in northern Iraq and that government helicopters had attacked villages in retaliation.

The Iraqi National Congress (INC), an opposition umbrella group, said in a statement that Brigadier-General Mohammad Hamoudi Aboud Al Taie was killed while driving in a convoy at Showan, near Kirkuk, a major oil-producing centre in the north, on the evening of Dec. 31.

Iraqi government helicopters Tuesday attacked the villages of Sartiq, Rahmaniya and Si Kurdkan in retaliation, the INC said.

It said the general's driver was also killed and other members of the convoy were captured by "national resistance forces". The INC said the general had just attended a meeting with the commander of the 34th armoured brigade, part of the first mechanised division.

It was not possible to obtain independent confirmation of the INC's claim.

Jews no longer God's chosen people — Coptic pope

CAIRO (AFP) — The Jews are no longer the chosen people of God nor is Palestine their "promised land," Coptic Pope Shenuda III said in an interview published here Wednesday.

"With faith in God now spread among hundreds of millions of people, it's impossible for God to distinguish four million Jews and ignore all those who venerate him," he told Al Mussawar magazine.

"Palestine is no longer the 'promised land' of the Jews ... God permitted the sons of Israel to inhabite this land to protect the faith during an era of paganism," he said.

"But with the arrival of Christianity, there was no longer any need for such isolation," said the patriarch of Egypt's Coptic Christians.

"The Jews wandered around the world after the destruction of their temple in the year 70. They came back on a promise from Balfour and not from God," he said, referring to the Balfour Declaration before Israel was set up in 1948.

"Apparently, the Jews are not living in our era but are frozen in the memory of the centuries" before the birth of Christ.

Election mania grips Palestinians

GAZA (R) — Candidates' posters covered up old anti-Israeli graffiti in self-ruled Gaza and the West Bank as the Palestinian election campaign went into full swing on Wednesday.

Young men who once risked their lives at night daubing slogans against Israeli occupiers now put up posters for a fee from some of the 700 Palestinians running in the Jan. 20 poll.

The Palestinian Central Eection Commission (CEC) Tuesday officially gave its permission to candidates to begin campaigning for seats on the 88-member legislative council. But preparations for the campaign had begun earlier.

"This is the first legislative election in the history of the Palestinian people and there is a great deal of interest in it," said Usama Abu Safiyeh, general coordinator of the Palestinian election commission in Gaza.

"People pin much hopes on this election to realise their dream," he said.

Under an Israeli-PLO self-rule deal signed last September,

Palestinians will choose the council and head of its executive branch, who will pick most of his cabinet from within the council.

At least 12 political parties and scores of businessmen, lawyers, academics and doctors are competing in the election.

Some candidates are running highly organised Western- style campaigns with well-staffed offices.

In posters, banners slung across streets and newspaper announcements, candidates highlight their personal struggle against Israeli rule. They also cite administrative expertise and family relations to drum up support.

Most candidates promise clean government, strong leadership and a firm stand in future negotiations with Israel on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, due to begin in May.

Most candidates also promise to help free Palestinian prisoners still held by Israel, ensure Jerusalem reverts to Palestinian sovereignty and improve living conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"I intend to turn every case up for discussion into an Islamic issue and to present Islam's view towards it," said Imad Al Falouji, a former activist in the Hamas Islamic group who is running as an independent candidate.

Rawiyeh Al Shawwa, a columnist and writer who is also competing as an independent candidate in Gaza said: "My election programme is my writings."

The election commission had allocated public facilities in each city, including school playgrounds and clubs for candidates to meet their constituencies.

Some candidates invite potential voters to feasts at homes and local newspapers have poked fun at the banquets with sarcastic cartoons.

Other candidates make public donations to charities, social and athletic clubs.

One candidate in the West Bank city of Nablus rented a coffee shop for the duration of the election campaign, treating customers to free coffee.

The election fever has bolstered business for a number of professions catering to the campaign. Ad agencies, newspapers, calligraphers and printshops are doing brisk business.

Hadi-Soft, a Nablus advertising agency, says a hand-drawn giant mural can cost up to $5,000. A package of 8,000 posters costs around $140 and newspaper advertisements cost $33 per inch.

"If it wasn't for the election campaign, we would have closed this print shop," said Abdul Rahim Hijjawi, manager of one of the largest such business in Nablus.

Jewish extremists will try to disrupt Palestinian polls — Arafat

BEIRUT (AFP) - Yasser Arafat, head of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), said Wednesday he expects Jewish radical groups to try and dispute the Jan. 20 elections to a self-rule council.

But Mr. Arafat, in an interview with the Saudi newspaper Asharq Al Awsat, ruled out attempts by Palestinian militants of Hamas and Islamic Jihad to undermine the elections in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem.

"The Israeli extremist groups have said more than once that they will foil the elections and stop them by force, especially in Jerusalem," he said.

Mr. Arafat denied that an agreement had been reached between his self-rule authority and Hamas under which the militants would put on hold for six months anti-Israeli attacks.

"There is no such agreement ... We only agreed on the importance of this phase and the importance of national unity during this phase," Mr. Arafat said.

He also said that an unnamed Palestinian faction had planned to assassinate him recently.

"There was such an attempt and a number of people were arrested. But some Iranian officials denied any knowledge about it," said the PLO leader, apparently referring to an Iranian-backed group.

Husseini says Jews might serve on Palestinian council

JERUSALEM (R) — The main Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader in Jerusalem said Wednesday he believed that Jews would one day live under Palestinian rule and even stand for election.

"We believe that one of these days we will also have Jews in Palestine," Faisal Al Husseini told Israel Television at the start of the first Palestinian national election campaign.

Asked if Jews might also run for the Palestinian Council, he said: "That too."

More than 700 Palestinians are competing for 88 seats in Jan. 20 elections for the legislative council outlined in Israel-PLO peace deals launching self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Some 130,000 jews live in settlements scattered throughout parts of the West Bank and Gaza still occupied by Israel. The future of those areas has yet to be negotiated with the PLO.

The poll will be the first of its kind for Palestinians, who now administer their own affairs in the Gaza Strip, seven West Bank towns and hundreds of villages under self-rule deals signed with Israel.

Mr. Husseini said Palestinians would understand a Jew serving in its council having an interest also in Israel, just as an Israeli Arab legislator in Israel's parliament would want to represent interests of both his country and the Palestinian people.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and 72-year-old woman activist Samiha Khalil are vying for the leadership of the council.

Mr. Husseini himself is not running for the legislative council.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

13:00 Tris — The Happy Professor
13:15 ... Fireman Sam
13:25 ... Hurricanes
13:50 ... My Secret Identity
14:10 ... NBA
15:00 The New Leave it to Beaver
15:30 Doc — The White Plague
16:30 Gillette World Sport Special
17:00 ... Sophie Et Virgine
17:30 Varieties — Le Monde Est A Vocus
19:00 ... News in French
19:15 ... Magazine — Archimede
19:30 ... News Headlines
19:35 ... Carol and Company
20:00 ... The Album Show
20:50 ... The New Avengers
22:00 ... News in English
22:25 Feature film: "The Man Upstairs"
23:59 Series — The Fifth Missile

PRAYER TIMES

05:04 ... Fajr
06:26 ... (Sunrise) Duha
11:33 ... Dhuhr
14:17 ... 'Asr
16:40 ... Maghreb
18:03 ... 'Icha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swelfieh, Tel 810740

Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terrasancta Church Tel: 622366

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church Tel. 652526.

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel: 845457

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

A cold mass will be affecting the Kingdom starting tomorrow. A tangible drop in temperatures is expected with rains in the northern parts then rains will fall on other parts of the Kingdom. In Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy and seas calm. Winds will be northwesterly active.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman	5/12
Aqaba	10 / 21
Deserts	4 / 13
Jordan Valley	10 / 21

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 12 Aqaba 23, Humidity readings: Amman 33 per cent, Aqaba 39 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Hanna Mansour	750197
Dr. Adnan Zaghloul	898140
Dr. Jamal Jbarah	847351
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyim	620115
Firas pharmacy	661912
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Ascma pharmacy	637055
Nairoukh pharmacy	623672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
Nairoujh pharmacy	623672
Najib pharmacy	847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ahmad Qanu	281741
Al Quds pharmacy	(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Samir Lawzi	989601
Khalifeh pharmacy	985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs	623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Company	636381
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn	644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn.	642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malhas, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shmeisani	607071
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Muasher Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafich	775111/26
Army, Marka	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	602240/50
Amal Hospital	607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery	865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital	(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital	(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:00 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:20 ... Sanaa (RJ)
09:20 ... Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30 ... New Delhi (RJ)
10:05 ... Beirut (RJ)
10:05 ... Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:20 ... Colombo (RJ)
16:25 ... London (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:35 ... Moscow (RJ)
18:25 ... Athens (RJ)
18:40 ... Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:10 ... Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
19:15 ... Al 'Ain, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
19:35 ... Rome (RJ)
00:10 ... Larnaca (RJ)
01:00 ... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

12:40 ... Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
12:40 ... Shariqah (AH)
13:00 ... Riyadh (SV)
14:00 ... Doha (Q7)
16:10 ... Dubai (EK)
19:00 ... Paris, Damascus (AF)
20:10 ... Beirut (ME)
20:20 ... Cairo (MS)
23:10 ... Istanbul (TK)
01:15 ... London (KJ)
01:20 ... Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 ... Beirut (RJ)
07:15 ... Moscow (RJ)
10:30 ... Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
11:00 ... Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:05 ... Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:15 ... Rome (RJ)
12:00 ... Paris (RJ)
12:05 ... London (RJ)
12:15 ... Athens (RJ)
20:00 ... Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:10 ... Cairo (RJ)
20:45 ... Larnaca (RJ)
20:15 ... Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:35 ... Jeddah (RJ)
22:05 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:50 ... Beirut, London (BA)
07:45 ... Beirut (ME)
13:30 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain, Muscat (GF)
13:30 ... Algiers (AH)
14:30 ... Riyadh (SV)
14:40 ... Istanbul (Q7)
17:15 ... Dubai (EK)
21:10 ... Cairo (MS)
02:30 ... Amsterdam (KL)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/ 500
Banana	680
Banana (Mukammar)	620
Banana (imported)	880/700
Cabbage	100 / 50
Carrot	60/150
Cauliflower	110/50
Cucumbers (large)	200/ 120
Cucumbers (small)	350 / 220
Eggplant	200/ 100
Garlic	750/500
Grape Fruit	220/150
Lemon	250/180
Marrow (large)	120/ 80
Marrow (small)	230 / 180
Onion (green)	220/150
Onion (dry)	230/ 150
Orange	540/400
Pepper (hot)	260 / 180
Pepper (sweet)	260/180
Potato	260/ 180
Radish	150/80
Spinach	120/80
String Beans	530 / 450
Tangerine	270/200
Tomato	170/100

Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Wednesday chairs a meeting of the founding council of JNFW (Petra photo)

Princess Basma says JNFW will work with other women's groups

AMMAN (J.T.)— Her Royal Highness Princess Basma said Wednesday that the newly formed Jordanian National Forum for Women (JNFW) will maintain close cooperation with all other non-governmental organisations aiming to improve women's status and conditions in the Kingdom.

Princess Basma urged the JNFW's founding council during a meeting at her office to enhance the forum's work in all the governorates and to reorganise its structures ahead of holding elections in six months. Princess Basma is chairperson of the forum which was officially announced last Friday.

The Princess told the meeting that the JNFW will work deligently to help women achieve their ambitions of improving social and economic conditions in their communities

During the meeting, the council elected Rand Hindawi as its secretary general and Kaltham Mreish as treasurer.

The JNFW brought together 25 local women committees in the Kingdom, with a total membership of nearly 16,000.

Princess meets JWU president

Later in the day, Princess Basma met with Asma Khader, president of the Jordanian Women's Union (JWU), and breifed her on the reasons behind the creation of the forum.

Ms. Khader, who was accompanied by a number of JWU members, discussed the forum's work with non- governmental organisations and with the union .

Both sides stressed that the JNFW's work complements the efforts of other non-governmental organisations, pledging to exchange expertise and bold consultations aimed at better serving Jordanian women and promoting their role in society.

Hammad to attend security meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Interior Salameh Hammad will head a Jordanian delegation to a three-day meeting on inter-Arab cooperation in security issues as well as fighting tourism, which will open in Tunis Thursday, according to a statement by the Interior Ministry .

The statement said Mr. Hammad will discuss with his counterparts from the Arab World a draft pan-Arab strategy for combating terrorism, a Saudi proposal for the establishment of a centre in Riyadh to conduct pan-Arab security studies and a draft strategy for combating crime, including drug abuse .

The ministers will discuss the recommendations of the 19th meeting by Arab police forces which, among other things, call for an information strategy aiming at spreading awareness on security matters, prevention of crime and the creation of a regional centre for research and training on crime prevention and social justice, said the statement.

It also said that the Arab interior ministers will discuss the ministerial council's budget for 1996.

According to the statement, the minister will be accompanied by two senior Ministry of Interior officials and two senior officers from the Public Security Department.

NRA urges diversification of energy resources

By Amy Henderson
Jorday Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN— Jordan needs to diversify its resources to meet upcoming demand for energy, and has to change its thinking towards the utilisation of natural gas to meet energy needs, an official at the Natural Resources Authority (NRA) said Wednesday.

Jordan has traditionally relied on imports of fuel oil to meet the majority of its energy needs. Saudi Arabia was its main supplier of oil until the Gulf crisis when Riyadh closed its pipeline to Jordan for its refusal to join the Western coalition that drove Iraq out of Kuwait. Today, the majority of fuel oil used in Jordan comes from Iraq.

But such dependence on Iraq is no longer realistic for Jordan given its increasing demand for energy resources, said Khaled Sheyyab, director of the Petroleum Exploration Department at the NRA.

Optimism that Jordan could one day become self-sufficient in its energy requirements developed last year following a series of announcements that Jordan's nascent National Oil Company would exploit additional amounts of natural gas from the Risheh gas field and that foreign companies in cooperation with the government-owned National Oil Company intend to prospect for oil in the Kingdom.

But, said Mr. Sheyyab, it is too early to tell whether or not expectations for self-sufficiency are realistic since demand for natural gas is increasing sharply and, beyond that, Jordan will soon be obliged to meet even more of its energy needs with natural gas.

"The utilisation of natural gas is increasing annually in the world because of its thermal efficiency and its low polluting character," he said, adding that "at the same time, the cost of oil is going up and eventually countries which use oil as an energy resource will pay an emissions tax."

"Jordan will have to adjust to that," he said.

The fact that jordan may be able to meet a higher percentage of its electric power generation needs by increasing its production of natural gas is only part of the picture, he explained. The discovery of substantial amounts of natural gas at the Risheh field and other small quantities at Hamzeh field would only help to meet 5.5 per cent of Jordan's total demand for energy resources, he said.

INNOVATIVE THINKING NEEDED TO MEET ENERGY NEEDS: The Hussein Thermal Power Station in Zerka is a major energy producing facility (File photo)

Potential consumers of natural gas in Jordan fall into four sectors: the electric power generation sector; the industrial sector as well as the transportation and domestic usage sectors. However, only those consumers in electric power generation and industry consume natural gas simply because the remaining two require considerable infrastructure whose cost would be difficult to meet should natural gas be imported for these purposes.

In the first two sectors alone, demand is increasing at an unprecedented rate, he said.

Today, Jordan's demand for natural gas is approximately 209 million cubic feet per day (equivalent to 1.6 million tonnes of fuel oil annually). Daily production of the resource from Risheh is only 28 million cubic feet with expectations that early this year that figure will reach approximately 40 million.

However, the NRA expects demand for natural gas in the two sectors to reach 227 million cubic feet daily by the year 2000, 291million cubic feet by the year 2005 and 331 million cubic feet by the year 2010. Total demand for natural gas is expected to reach 270 million cubic feet by the year 2000 and 415 million cubic feet by the year 2005.

"If we don't find deposits of natural gas and oil, we'll be obliged to compensate by importing fuel oil from Iraq and other countries," he said. Jordan's current demand for natural gas (209 million cubic feet daily) is equivalent to 1.6 million tonnes of imported fuel oil annually, at an estimated cost of $160 million.

This is why, said Mr. Sheyyab, "as long as Jordan isn't an oil producing country, it's bad news for us and our development."

"We also don't want to find ourselves in the same position that we did following the Gulf crisis when our only oil pipeline was closed and we had no real alternative to supply our energy needs," he said.

Therefore, Jordan is also considering the possibility of importing quantities of natural gas from neighbouring countries. "We are discussing the technical and financial possibilities with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, but bear in mind that we only started exploring this in 1995," he said.

"This will take considerable time — we need pipelines to bring the gas and a comprehensive gasoline network in the country just to distribute to these two consumers alone."

Studies are in progress regarding infrastructure for such a project, he said, but refrained from disclosing the potential cost or a timeframe for such a project.

It is widely believed that Jordan will take advantage of the deal signed between Israel and the American company Enron during the Amman economic summit last October to buy Qatari gas. A major gas terminal to be built at Aqaba port will receive liquefied natural gas ferried from Enron plant in Qatar. From Aqaba, gas will be transported overland to Israel.

UNRWA grants employees salary raise

AMMAN (J.T.) — The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) will offer its employees in Jordan a monthly raise equivalent to the cost of living allowance which the government plans to give its employees this year, according to Dennis Brown, coordinator of UNRWA affairs in Jordan .

Mr Brown announced the agency's decision at a meeting with Ibrahim Tarshihi, head of the Palestinian Affairs Department.

The Jordanian government had announced that it will grant its employees a monthly JD 10 cost of living allowance as of the beginning of May.

UNRWA's employees last month staged a brief sit-in in front of the agency's head offices to protest UNRWA's refusal to grant them salary increase. They warned that they would go on a general strike later this month unless their demands were met.

Employees representatives said they were taking this action because UNRWA has decided to grant them only a five per cent monthly raise while, they said, the agency's employees in Syria received 15 per cent increases.

Mr. Brown told Mr Tarshihi that the five per cent raise was given following a survey conducted by a specialised committee who had interviewed officials from various government departments in order to determine the amount of the raise and who should receive it.

Mr . Tarshihi said all the agency's employees should receive salary raises.

He urged the agency to reconsider the salaries of all its employees and to open a dialogue with them with the purpose of reaching a settlement

But Mr. Tarshihi said that any strike by the teachers and other employees would adversely affect the refugees.

Jordanians to pray for rain as rainfall remains below average

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN— The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Wednesday urged Jordanians, including women and children, to take part in a rain prayer at the Amman International Hall in Marj Al Hamam area Thursday.

Ministry of Awqaf spokesperson Jamal Harasis said the prayer will be held to ask for God's mercy due to the limited rainfall this year.

"The prayer is a form of admitting our sins, and asking God for forgiveness and mercy," Mr. Harasis told the Jordan times, adding that if God accepts "our genuine entreat," rain will fall.

The Meteorology Department said that this season's rainfall (until Dec. 31,) was 20 per cent below its annual average. According to meteorologist Jamal Al Musa, 30 per cent of the annual rainfall average of 273 millimetre should have fallen by now.

A study carried out by Amin Qarameen, the director of the Meteorology Department, showed that rainfall in 1994-95 amounted to only 75 per cent of the annual average.

The annual rainfall average is measured at the Marka Airport area because it is the only part of the kingdom with rainfall records dating back to 1923.

The study notes that during the past 72 years, the rainfall reached 276 mm during 11 years. In 51 years , the rainfall was below the annual average. In 1991-1992 the rainfall was 200 per cent higher than the annual average.

The prayer for rain is traditionally carried out in the open air and worshippers are recommended to wear their clothes inside out as a symbol and expression of helplessness and humbleness.

Muslims first prayed for rain during the time of Prophet Mohammed, who urged Muslims to pray for God's help in dry seasons.

Tender for Irbid sewerage system to be announced

AMMAN (Petra)— The Ministry of Water and Irrigation will soon announce a tender for building a sewerage network in Irbid at an estimated cost of JD 45 million, Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat said Wednesday.

Dr. Irshheidat said that an international firm working in conjunction with a local company has prepared the feasibility study for the project, which will be financed by the German Development Bank through a long term soft loan.

Furthermore, he said, the ministry will also soon carry out three smaller sewerage projects in a district in southern Amman, and Naour and Wadi Seer towns. Studies for these projects have been prepared, he said.

Until now 60 per cent of urban areas in Jordan are served by sewerage network.

Referring to the waste water treatment plant in the Khirbet Al Samra district near Zarqa, the minister said that work is underway for boosting the plant's capacity at the cost of JD 10 million.

he also said that a local firm will this month start replacing the water networks in Jabal Hussein and Jabal Nuzha areas at the total cost of JD 4.72 million, 80 per cent of which will be covered through a soft loan from the German Development Bank.

This project, said the minister, will take two years.

Saying that damage in the old water network in Amman causes a loss of 50 per cent of water pumped to residences and businesses, the minister said replacing the network will save a considerable amount of water.

According to the minister, the replacement of all water networks in Jordan is expected to cost JD 200 million, which is expected to be covered by more soft loans from the German bank.

He said that the Ministry of Water and Irrigation has already replaced the old and worn out networks in Irbid and Zarqa, and expects to start work on the network in Mafraq later this year

Minister opens children's books seminar on behalf of Princess Haya

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputising for Her Royal Highness Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, the Minister of Social Development, Salwa Dhamen-Masri Wednesday opened a seminar on children's libraries at the Haya Arts Centre (HAC) in Amman

The five-day seminar, which was organised by the centre in cooperation with the Jordan Library Association (JLA), will focus on children's books and publications and means to encourage children to read.

Addressed the opening session of the seminar, HAC Director General Nabih Riyal underlined the importance of educating children and encouraging them to develop the habit of reading

Yousef Qandeel, the JLA president, said the seminar will focus on children's libraries in Jordan and their role in education.

Several working papers presented at the first session of the seminar dealt with teaching aids in schools, children's newspapers, children's libraries, reading habits among children and model children's libraries.

On the sidelines of the seminar, the minister opened a children's book exhibition which displayed a collection of books, magazines and periodicals.

At the opening ceremony, the minister paid tribute to pioneers in children literature. Those included Rox Al Uzeizi, the late poet Husni Fariz, Rawdat Al Hudhud, Munir al Hour and Mohammad Mallas.

Food council bans sale of fish shipment

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government said Wednesday it would not allow a shipment of Argentine fish (armouti) to be marketed in the Kingdom after laboratory tests proved that the estimated 400 tonnes of fish were unfit for human consumption.

The Food Council said in a statement issued after a meeting chaired by Health Minister Aref Bataineh that samples of the fish were tested at the laboratories of the Greater Amman Municipality, the Health Ministry and the Ministry of Agriculture as well as the laboratories of the University of Jordan and the Jordan University of Science and Technology and were proved to be unfit for human consumption.

The fish were found to contain worms harmful to health, said the statement .

The shipment will thus be destroyed if its owners agree or will remain impounded until the court issues an order allowing that, according to the statement.

It said if the importers submit a request for reexporting the whole shipment, the Ministry of Health would consider that option.

The Food Council, which was set up in 1971, groups the ministers of health, supply, agriculture, industry and trade as well as a representative of the Greater Amman Municipality .

Alleged CID office attackers trial postponed

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The State Security Court Wedensday postponed indefinitely the trial of six men accused of attacking the office of the Central Intelligence Department (CID) at Baqaa refugee camp in December 1994, after two of the defendants refused to be represented by court appointed lawyers.

A judicial source said the two defendants refused the appointed attorneys because they said they "do not believe in the justice system."

Presiding Judge Hafez Amin said that the court will contact the Jordanian Bar Association (JBA) to assign defence attorneys for the two defendants.

The source added that another two defendants agreed to a court decision to appoint two lawyers to defend them in the case.

The remaining two will be represented by an attorney whome they chose.

five of the defendants are charged with assault on a government office with the intent of hindering the (CID) from exercising its constitutional duties as well as the distribution of pamphlets slandering His Majesty King Hussein.

They allegedly went to Baqaa camp on Dec. 26, 1994 and showered the CID building with bullets from a machine gun, injuring one person before fleeing the scene. The defendants are accused of conducting the attack to avenage the arrest of the sixth suspect, Ibrahim Mohammed Zein Al Abedine, who is believed to be their leader, three days earlier.

They are also accused of attacking the CID offices to avenge the State Security Court's sentencing on Dec. 24 of 11 Islamist to death, and seven more to imprisonment.

The five defendants are Tha'er Yousef Ghanem, Shadi Jawdat Saleh, Yousef Ahmad Amar, Ghasan Fa'eq Mismar and Abdul Rahim Mohammad Safarini.

The suspects are accused of starting their activities in April of 1994 by plotting to attack tourist sites and security offices in the Kingdom.

Change of tactics in political war angers strike-weary Dhaka residents

DHAKA (AFP) — Infuriated residents of the Bangladesh capital had to rush back to Dhaka Wednesday after the opposition postponed their latest general strike, even though their political war with the government rages on.

Tens of thousands of residents who jammed into buses, trains and cars on Tuesday, hoping to add the expected two day strike to their normal weekend, joined new queues to get back into the capital Wednesday.

At a meeting Tuesday night, the opposition Awami League of Sheikh Hasina Wajed delayed the start of the two-day strike until Jan. 8 after the election commission put back the deadline for nominations for next month's general elections.

The Feb. 7 vote has become the latest focus of the 20-month old opposition campaign to bring down Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and force elections under a neutral administration.

Government-opposition talks, being mediated by the United States, have spluttered to a halt and Ms. Wajed and her allies have threatened to boycott and disrupt the elections.

Government Minister Abdus Salam Talukder, secretary-general of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), warned his party might go ahead with the polls. Some smaller parties have said they might contest the event.

But calling off the strike — the 26th in the past year — further angered the public, which is already showing growing signs of disillusionment with politicians on both sides of the divide.

Many people said they heard the stoppage had been called off while heading for the country and turned back midway. Many others rushed back Wednesday morning.

Telephones at newspapers and news agencies were jammed with hundreds of calls from people seeking a confirmation that they had to change their plans.

The strike was to have started Wednesday to tie in with the original deadline for filing election nomination papers.

The election commission, having already postponed the election from Jan. 18 to Feb. 7, has now put back the candidates' deadline to Jan. 8.

The commission said it hoped all parties would come to "an understanding" by the new date so the elections can go ahead as planned.

Opposition disruption of the polls would be a major blow to their credibility, analysts say. Already only 47 nomination papers had been filed for 27 constituencies by late Tuesday, commission sources said.

But at the moment there is little sign of an end to the hostilities.

Ms. Wajed and other opposition groups still insist that free polls are impossible under the government. Ms. Zia, who has continued as interim premier since the dissolution of parliament on Nov.24, still describes the opposition demands as unconstitutional.

The league accused the government and election commission of "making a farce" by continually changing the election schedule.

Ms. Wajed was to speak about the crisis again at a rally late Wednesday.

The BNP secretary general told reporters his party would participate in polls without the main opposition groups under certain conditions and if some smaller mainly right wing parties also participated.

Mr. Talukder accused the opposition of stalling talks with their conditions and demands that an additional 90 days be allowed for the elections. Under the constitution, the elections must be held within 90 days of parliament's dissolution.

The last contacts between the opposition and government, brokered by U.S. Ambassador David Merrill, were last Sunday.

Thou shalt not make outrageous election promises, politicians told in Australia

CANBERRA (AFP) — Politicians here are being urged by the Roman Catholic Church to foresake their political urges, to stop telling fibs and to adopt a code of conduct that might help them regain community trust.

New commandments proposed in a discussion paper by the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) include: thou shalt not make outrageous election promises, thou must refrain from conspicuous consumption and thou must rise above personal abuse.

But they fell largely on stony ground Wednesday, supported only by the centrist Australian Democrats Party which has the power to influence the vote only when it is tied between the major parties in the upper house senate.

Neither Prime Minister Paul Keating nor his major political opponent, opposition leader John Howard, would comment on the paper, titled Politicians And Citizens: Roles and Responsibilities.

The paper was written by ACSJC member, Professor John Warhurst, who heads the department of political science at Canberra's Australian National University.

It calls for a higher standard of modern political life, but makes an equally strong call on the church community and all Australians to be involved in the political process.

Mr. Keating stepped into church territory last year, sparking a row when he implied the Pope was on the side of the ruling Labour Party, suggesting in fact that the Pope was against hardline politicians such as Mr. Howard.

The prime ministerial claim was heartily condemned by the opposition as a wild porkie of the sort now frowned upon by the ACSJC guidelines.

Publication of the paper coincides with a period of unprecedented tension between church and state, particularly in Victoria where churches have been bitterly critical of state government policy on gambling.

However, Mr. Warhurst said Wednesday that had nothing to do with the timing of the paper; rather it was linked to the upcoming election, due by May but widely tipped for March.

"I think in the lead-up to a federal election it's an opportunity for all Australians to think about our political system and the political behaviour of both politicians and citizens," he said in a television interview.

"I think it's a bad thing the image of politicians is low and anything we can do to increase the healthy communication between citizens and politicians has to be a good thing."

However, Mr. Warhurst said he was sympathetic towards the difficult job politicians had to do.

"It's a system they are locked into," he said. "But surveys show many Australians don't think politicians can be trusted and we're suggesting that here's a range of issues which politicians ought to address to try to lift their public image."

Australian democrats acting leader Sid Spindler welcomed the call for improved political conduct.

"Any code of conduct for parliamentarians must be enforceable to be effective," Mr. Spindler said in a statement.

The church initiative follows moves late last year by the democrats to introduce an enforceable code of conduct for MPs covering issues such as conflict of interest and a ban on using their position for personal gain.

The Prince of Wales is accompanied by Tara Palmer-Tomkinson, daughter of his skiing-mate Charly Palmer-Tomkinson, as they enter a ski-lift onto the slopes above the Swiss alpine skiing resort of Klosters (AFP photo)

Red Cross readies aid ship, execution of food looters reported

SEOUL (AFP) — The South Korean Red Cross (KNRC) said Wednesday it was readying a third aid shipment to ease the food crisis in North Korea, as a news agency quoted travellers saying food looters there faced "summary execution."

A KNRC spokesman in Seoul said 100,000 packets of instant noodles, 2,000 blankets and 20,000 pairs of socks will be shipped this month.

Purchased through fundraising drives by religious circles and civic groups, the shipment is the third to be sent since November to the north's hungry.

The first two, consisting of 8,000 blankets, had been received by the International Committee Of The Red Cross which said distribution to flood victims was under way in nine counties of three provinces.

The counties are in areas where the United Nations has said hundreds of thousands of children are suffering malnutrition as a result of flood-worsened grain shortages with the onset of the bitter northern winter.

Meanwhile the southern Yonhap news agency said South Korean Foreign Minister Gong Ro-Myung, armed with the opinions of Beijing and Moscow, would discuss the food crisis with U.S. Secretary Of State Warren Christopher and his Japanese counterpart Yohei Kono in Paris on Jan. 9.

Foreign ministry officials however were unable to confirm the food issue will be on Mr. Gong's agenda when he meets Mr. Christopher and Mr. Kono during a conference on aid to the Palestinians.

"It is true that China and Russia have told U.S. about the situation in the north in conversations with diplomats, but we have not received any actual data on food production or details of the harvest," a ministry official told AFP.

Yonhap said the bottom line of the Russian and Chinese diplomats had been that though the food situation was serious, the North Korean system did not appear to be in danger of collapse.

Mr. Gong said last week food aid to the North would be "inevitable" if it was verified that the situation was critical.

The agency quoted recently-returned travellers from North Korea as citing a new decree under which "anyone plundering food or livestock shall be executed summarily."

It also quoted the travellers saying food rations throughout the country had been suspended until May, except in special areas such as Pyongyang and for the military.

"Provided the population eats one meal a day (400 grammes per person) the absolute shortfall (of foodgrains) amounts to 1.2 million tonnes, without which we will all starve", the agency quoted an official as telling one traveller.

Official monitors here said they had no confirmation of the Yonhap reports, which came amid a fierce debate here over the seriousness of the situation and whether to resume rice aid in the face of North Korea's continued hostility to the South.

"We have no reports of such declarations," an official of the Naewoe monitoring service told AFP.

France condemns bomb attack in Netherlands

Paris (R) — France Wednesday condemned a bomb attack on a building housing a branch of a French bank and a French consulate in the Netherlands but avoided speculation that it might be a protest against its nuclear tests.

Calling the attack "a criminal or terrorist act", foreign ministry spokesman Jacques Rummelhardt said the bombing of the Paribas Bank in Arnhem was primarily an affair for the Dutch authorities.

"We condemn this attack all the more strongly because this bank has ties to France and because the building is also the site of the honorary French consulate in Arnhem," he told a daily briefing.

Dutch police said there were no claims of responsibility but speculated that the attack could be a protest against France's current nuclear weapons testing in the south Pacific. The fifth test in the series was carried out last week.

Mr. Rummelhardt refused to speculate on motives for the attack. "We have full confidence in the speed of the Dutch authorities ... To find those responsible and in the determination of Dutch justice to punish them," he said.

President Jacques Chirac's decision last year to resume nuclear tests, breaking a 1992 moratorium, touched off a storm of protests around the world. Protesters have mainly confined themselves to peaceful demonstrations.

Rangoon troops enter Khun Sa headquarters after ceasefire

BANGKOK (AFP) — Government troops have entered the headquarters of accused drug lord Khun Sa in northeastern Burma after the two sides signed a ceasefire, a dissident group said Wednesday.

Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA) voted in a referendum on Dec. 22 to operate as a regional defence force under the Burmese government, the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) said in a statement.

A ceasefire was signed a week later, after which three battalions of Burmese troops entered the MTA headquarters at Ho Mong, about 30 kilometres from the Thai border, the statement said, citing informed Shan sources.

The statement said another seven battallions were stationed in the hills around another MTA stronghold, Doi Lang, to the east of Ho Mong, but did not mention any fighting.

An MTA source in the northern Thai town of Mae Hong Son told AFP by telephone that nine Burmese intelligence officers had arrived at Ho Mong on Dec. 30 for talks which were still ongoing.

Burmese military officials in Rangoon said that ceasefire overtures had been made towards the MTA, which has been fighting for an independent Shan state.

They did not give details and would not comment on reports that Khun Sa, who handed power over to the MTA's central committee on Dec. 22, had surrendered.

The whereabouts of Khun Sa, a self-styled Shan independence leader who has been accused of drug trafficking and presiding over the world's largest opium producing areas, were unknown.

MTA sources Tuesday denied reports that government soldiers had taken Ho Mong and that Khun Sa was in hiding.

The sources said the reports were based on the presence of the more than 2,000 Burmese troops who had arrived at Doi Lang, opposite the northwestern Thai town of Mae Aey Thaton.

Another Shan source reached by telephone in northern Thailand said Wednesday that other ethnic groups in the area had reported the presence of Burmese soldiers at Doi Lang.

"There must have been a deal made or they wouldn't have gotten that far," the source, who requested anonymity, said.

Rangoon has reached ceasefire agreements with 15 ethnic insurgent groups in return for aid and de facto control of rebel-held territories.

The government had previously refused to recognise the MTA as an ethnic group eligible for a ceasefire agreement, saying it was a drug-running group.

China free of ethnic rivalry, government says — but party gloomy in Tibet

BEIJING (AFP) — The Chinese government Wednesday brushed aside notions that the country faced a Balkans-style breakup, but warned it would not flinch from its drive to stamp out separatism.

The self-confident assertion in Beijing contrasted, however, with a gloomy assessment by the authorities in Tibet, who complained of an "increasingly bitter and complicated fight" against Tibetan separatists.

Ismail Amat, a minister with the State Nationalities Commission, told China Daily: "At present, relations among our nation's nationalities are fairly good, and different nationalities respect each other, help each other and live in harmony."

"We have confidence in the country's national unity and it will be strengthened and reinforced in the future," he said, in response to a question whether China faced ethnic conflicts similar to those in Africa and the Balkans.

China has 56 nationalities, but ethnic Han Chinese account for 92 per cent of the country's population of 1.2 billion. Two strategic regions, Tibet and Xinjiang, are regularly troubled by separatist agitation, despite a permanent crackdown by the authorities.

Many experts — Chinese and foreign — suggest the country may split up after the death of 91-year-old Patriarch Deng Xiaoping, as the ruling Communist Party is weakened by factional fighting and ethnic groups fight against Beijing's rule.

"Separatist activities conducted by a very small number of people are doomed to failure," Mr. Amat said. "We can rely on the force of the majority will to crush separatist activities."

In contrast, the Tibet Daily, received here Wednesday, reported on a meeting of the standing committee of the Communist Party in the Chinese-ruled Tibet Autonomous Region.

The meeting, held on Dec. 23 under the leadership of local party chief Chen Kuiyuan, said Tibet suffered from "seven factors that disfavour economic and social development."

One of the factors is "the "increasingly bitter and complicated fight against separatism," the paper said.

Mr. Amat, an ethnic Uighur, added that ethnic conflicts in China were unlikely because centuries of unification had led the various nationalities to have economic dependence on each other.

Since the 1949 revolution, the government had also implemented a policy to guarantee equal rights to all nationalities and to promote economic development in regions where there are ethnic minorities, he said.

He acknowledged there was a wide economic and social gulf between the rich regions of eastern China, which are populated by Han, and those of the west, where there are ethnic minorities.

But this situation "will never lead to tensions between different nationalities," he said.

The Tibet Daily, however, said that the party's standing committee painted a rather somber tableau of Tibet's economy, reporting on "weakness in agriculture," "obsolescent equipment" in energy, transport and telecommunications" and "under-developed industry."

"Social contradictions of all kinds are increasing and are seriously affecting economic development," the committee warned.

Cold snap kills 20 million butterflies

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — A cold snap has claimed the lives of some 20 million Monarch butterflies in Mexico, the environmental Group of 100 has said after touring traditional sanctuary areas in the state of Michoacan. The butterflies migrate south each year to reproduce in warmer climates, but this year they encountered some of Mexico's coldest temperatures since 1938. The group of 100 estimated that up to a third of the total Monarch population perished in the extreme weather.

Errant French boat ships up in Scotland

BREST, France (AFP) — An errant sailing boat which slipped its anchor in a northern French port was recovered more than a month later by trawlermen off the coast of Scotland, it emerged Wednesday. The six metre "castor" had apparently drifted hundreds of miles across the English Channel and Irish Sea after disappearing from its moorings in the Britanny port of Portsall. It was recovered by Scottish fishermen from the port of Fraserburg, according to its owner Gustave l'Hostis who was forced to drive to Scotland to recover his vessel. The incident in November was not the first time the boat has gone missing. Only weeks before it had disappeared, only to be found off the coast of Plymouth four days later. The boat's wanderings are not cheap. Under Scottish law, the owners of the trawler which found the boat, the "challenger," can claim up to half the value of the vessel in recoverers' fees.

Nepal to present female rhinos to London Zoo

KATHMANDU (AFP) — Nepal is to donate a pair of female rhinos to London Zoo for breeding and research purposes, the state-run RSS news agency reported Wednesday. "The government has taken this decision at the request of the British government and in keeping with the traditional close, friendly relations between the two kingdoms and future cooperation," it said. "The Zoological Society of London under which London Zoo operates is known for skill in rhino breeding and it is currently engaged in one-horn rhino breeding research," it said quoting a press release of the Nepalese Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation. According to a 1994 census carried out at the Royal Chitwan National Park, to the south there are between 446 to 466 one-horned rhinos sheltered there. There were only about 80 such rhinos when the national park was established in 1972. "A study estimates the annual reproduction rate of one-horned rhino at about 3.76 per cent," it said.

Panda owners ordered to pay damages

BEIJING, (AFP) — A Chinese court has ordered a zoo to pay damages of 37,118 yuan ($4,472) to a boy who was left disabled after being bitten by one of its pandas, the China Daily has said. The court in Huzhou in the eastern province of Zhejiang ruled in favour of 10-year-old Lu Jie, who sued Lanzhou Zoo after its panda Ling Ling attacked him on Feb. 26 when he irritated the animal by climbing over an iron fence into her cage to tease her, the report said. The incident occurred in Huzhou People's Park, to which Ling Ling was on loan from the zoo, located in the northwestern province of Gansu. The court found that the panda's owners had put her on show in the park "without making adequate preparations," the report said.

American Brenda Denis Ferguson is led out of the Petailing Jaya magistrate court after being acquitted of trafficking heroin (AFP photo)

American woman freed after trafficking charge dropped

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) —American Brenda Denise Ferguson was released Wednesday by a Malaysian court after the public prosecutor's office dropped its charge of heroin trafficking, which carries a mandatory death sentence.

"I want to go home to the U.S. as soon as I can... thank you very much," said a relieved Ferguson, 42, who was accompanied by her lawyer, Francis Ng, after magistrate Tay Lee Ly ordered her release.

Ms. Ferguson, a mother of two from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has been in detention since her arrest at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport on Sept. 4 by customs officers when found with a packet police said contained 2.4 kilogrammes of heroin.

She was charged under Section 39 (b) of Malaysia's Dangerous Drugs Act, which carries a mandatory death sentence on conviction.

Ms. Ferguson was brought to the magistrate's court in Petaling Jaya, outside Kuala Lumpur, Wednesday for the case to be mentioned pending its transfer to the high court.

However, the customs prosecuting officer, K. Balakrishnan, told the court that the government's public prosecutor had directed him to withdraw the charges. He did not give any reason.

Under Malaysia's tough anti-drug laws, anyone found with at least 15 grammes of heroin, 200 grammes of cannabis or a kilogramme of opium, is deemed a trafficker and faces a mandatory death sentence.

More than 100 people, at least a third of them foreigners, have been hanged here since the mandatory death sentence was introduced in 1987, officials said.

Chirac tells ministers to be more positive

PARIS (AFP) — President Jacques Chirac told his government Wednesday to be more positive and "less chilly" if it wants to restore hope to the French people mired in economic and social unrest.

In traditional New Year wishes he said ministers had to go further in explaining policies and listening to ordinary people.

"We have to give hope to the French people," he said in the ceremony at the Elysee Palace, after receiving wishes from ministers led by Prime Minister Alain Juppe.

"We have to be more positive, less chilly, we have to fuel optimism," he said, in comments reported by Elysee spokeswoman Catherine Colonna before the weekly cabinet meeting.

He congratulated Mr. Juppe "for his brave and determined action in difficult circumstances" — a reference to a national strike before Christmas which paralysed the country for more than three weeks.

"Over the last six months the record has been one of quality. We have committed ourselves to putting things in order and promoting social harmony. The government has found its style and unity," he said.

"But we must nevertheless go further," he said, adding that ministers had to "establish a culture of consultation .. go out on the ground .. listen to what people have to say."

Mr. Juppe has been criticised — including by members of his own conservative majority — for being too concerned in his public pronouncements with deficits and economic data, and not enough with people's everyday problems.

Criticism emerged in particular over his handling of a three week strike crisis before Christmas, sparked by his reform plans for France's debt-ridden welfare system.

The prime minister, in his wishes to the French people, insisted that his reforms were necessary. "We have to believe in what we have undertaken. We have to communicate our strength of conviction," he said.

Praising Mr. Chirac's presidency, he said he was "happy .. to know that there was a captain to hold the tiller."

Berlusconi wants Dini's immediate resignation

ROME (AFP) — Italy's centre-right leader, Silvio Berlusconi, called on Prime Minister Lamberto Dini to step down before the next move to end the political impasse: either a debate on forming a new government or early polls.

Mr. Berlusconi, a former prime minister, made the call in an interview carried Wednesday by Il Giornale, owned by his brother Paolo.

Mr. Dini resigned Saturday — as he had promised a year ago on his appointment following the collapse of Berlusconi's government — after pushing through vital legislation, including a new budget.

President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro has refused to accept Mr. Dini's resignation and wants him to seek a new majority in parliament which will allow him to hang on as prime minister during the next six months of Italy's presidency of the European Union.

"The experiment of (Dini's) government of technocrats is over. We must open up the political crisis and then see if there is a possibility of moving towards elections immediately, or, at the very least, whether there is a (parliamentary) majority" capable of governing and carrying out reforms, Mr. Berlusconi said.

The newspaper said that Mr. Berlusconi's centre-right alliance would submit a censure motion to topple the government when the debate opened in the lower house of parliament sometime next week.

The exact date of the debate was to be announced later Wednesday by the lower house speaker Irene Pivetti and leaders of the parliamentary groups.

Parliamentary sources say the debate will be held between Jan. 9 and 11, and end with a vote on a motion on whether parliament backs a new government or favours early elections.

If a censure motion is adopted, and Mr. Dini forced to resign, this does not necessarily prevent him from heading a new government, the sources said.

Japan to freeze plans for fast-breeder

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan is to freeze plans to build an experimental fast-breeder reactor following a serious accident last month at a prototype plant, the Yomiuri Shimbun said Wednesday.

Power companies made the decision after the Monju prototype reactor at Fukui Prefecture, central Japan, was shut down after the leak of several tonnes of liquid sodium coolant, it said, quoting industry sources.

The firms were initially scheduled to invest 400 billion yen ($4 billion) in building an experimental fast-breeder reactor, based on data obtained at the prototype.

Construction of the new reactor, with a capacity of 660 megawatts, was originally expected to begin by 2005, leading to commercial operations by around 2030.

Monju, costing $6 billion, had been regarded as the most important project in the nation's nuclear energy policy.

Ramos guards on their toes with foiled assassination plot

MANILA (AFP) — President Fidel Ramos' security detail is taking an alleged assassination attempt against the Philippine leader seriously despite the arrest of one of the supposed conspirators, the unit commander said Wednesday.

Pakistani suspect Mohammad Anees, one of 15 alleged foreign Islamic terrorists detained by Philippine police since last month, is said by the police to have plotted the murder of Mr. Ramos with two other suspects now awaiting trial on unrelated charges in the United States.

"The president is still (following) his normal schedule," Brigadier General Leo Alvez of the presidential security group told reporters. "Security cannot do anything but provide the necessary arrangements."

He described the assassination threat as "the third major one we have seen so far" since Mr. Ramos assumed office in June 1992. All three plots were "apparently" hatched by the same group, he added.

Interior Secretary Rafael Alunan said Tuesday that Mr. Anees and World Trade Centre bombing suspects Ramzi Yussef and Abdul Hakim Murad plotted to assassinate Mr. Ramos, military chief General Arturo Enrile and Philippine National Police Director General Recaredo Sarmiento.

Visiting British Secretary of State for Defence Michael Portillo hailed the government's efforts, saying "I congratulate the Philippines."

He added it was important to show terrorists that there was nowhere on earth, "where they can operate with impunity."

Not all Filipinos were convinced of the threat, as critics said Mr. Ramos was using the crackdown against foreign Muslims as a diversion from its failure to curb rising common crime.

"The story is unadulterated bull," the Today newspaper said in an editorial on its Wednesday editions. "We'll hold to that view even after the government sets off a few harmless bombs here and there to prove U.S. wrong."

Asked about allegations that the government fabricated the assassination plot story, Gen. Alvez said: "If they look at it as a gimmick, they are entitled to their own perception."

Meanwhile, the government is to impose restrictions on visas for foreign visitors to try to prevent potential terrorists from entering the country, the immigration commission said Wednesday.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), police and intelligence agencies agreed to a plan to issue visas only in an applicant's "country of origin," immigration Commissioner Leandro Verceles told reporters.

"They (embassies and consulates) are tasked to carefully screen the bearer of the visa," Mr. Verceles said.

Philippine police last month arrested 15 foreigners from Islamic countries who were suspected of involvement in separate plots to assassinate Mr. Ramos and Pope John Paul II during his visit to this country in January, 1995.

"The visas of the Pakistanis were issued in Bangkok," Mr. Verceles said.

Under the new rules, foreigners holding Pakistani passports would only be able to secure Philippine visas at a Philippine consulate or embassy in Pakistan. Mr. Verceles did not say when the new regulation would take effect.

Armed gang abducts foreigners

SAN JOSE (AFP) — The armed gang that kidnapped a German tourist and Swiss national from a popular Costa Rican resort has demanded a million dollar ransom and pay hike for government workers, Channel 7-TV reported Tuesday.

Nicola Fleuchaus, a 24-year-old German tourist, and Regula Susana Sigfrid, 50, a Swiss resident of Costa Rica and tour operator, were kidnapped late Monday from a hotel in the northern province of San Carlos.

As many as 10 assailants armed with AK-47 assault rifles stormed into the La Laguna Del Lagarto lodge just before midnight and forced guests onto the floor for two and a half hours, authorities said.

They then shot out the tires of vehicles parked at the hotel and fled with their hostages in a green all-terrain vehicle, later abandoning their getaway car near the Nicaraguan border, authorities said.

Information Minister Alejandro Soto said the vehicle was found abandoned some 20 kilometres from the Nicaraguan border in an area where arms trafficking has flourished since the end of the Nicaraguan civil war in 1990.

Police launched a search of the area, and the Costa Rican government alerted Nicaragua to the possibility the kidnappers had crossed the border.

"It's presumed that they are experienced people, given the weapons and procedures they used," Mr. Soto said. Evidence suggested foreigners carried out the kidnapping with the help of Costa Ricans, he added.

Mr. Soto acknowledged the two women probably were taken for ransom.

Robbery did not appear to be a motive because the assailants took only two watches and food from the hotel, he said. The women were among a group of 11 German tourists at the hotel.

A Swiss foreign ministry spokesman in Geneva said the kidnappers were demanding a million dollars for the women. While Mr. Soto dismissed the reported ransom demand as speculation, Channel 7 Television here said that was only one of their demands.

The television also said the group was pushing for an 18-per cent raise for government workers here, and for the release from jail of a commando that launched a 1993 attack on a local court.

The kidnapping is a headache for authorities here because tourism is Costa Rica's main source of hard currency.

Tigers step up strikes to counter 'historic' defeat

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil Tiger guerrillas mounted a massive attack against an air force camp in eastern Sri Lanka Wednesday after they conceded to a major setback in the north of the country, officials said.

Gunmen from the separatist Liberation Tigers Of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) launched the pre-dawn raid against the Pankulam air force training facility near the town of Morawewa, killing one airman and wounding at least 12, officials said.

"The Tigers used a heavy concentration of cadres. They obviously wanted to overrun the camp but failed in their mission," a military spokesman here said, adding that rebel casualties were not immediately known.

Air force reinforcements were sent from the nearby main air base of Morawewa, a military statement said.

Chief military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said the LTTE had escalated their activities in the eastern province following the fall of Jaffna, their northern citadel, last month.

"They are trying to show that their presence in the east is larger than life," Mr. Munasinghe said. "They are carrying out mortar attacks and sporadic raids but are unable to make any significant gains."

The latest LTTE attack added to the stepped-up violence in the eastern province from where the military withdrew troops to boost their battle against the Tigers in Jaffna last month.

At least 23 people have died in sporadic violence in the region since the new year, according to official figures.

The Tigers' supremo, Velupillai Prabhakaran, in a statement issued Tuesday admitted for the first time that President Chandrika Kumaratunga's military had gained an "historic" success by taking Jaffna, the capital of his de-facto state.

The Chandrika government "has scored historical achievements in the task of destroying the geographical unity and integrity of the Tamil homeland and disrupting the national life of the Tamils," Mr. Prabhakaran said in his statement.

Security forces captured the town of Jaffna after nearly 50 days of fighting that also claimed the lives of some 500 soldiers and an estimated 2,000 Tiger cadres.

Defence sources said the army was conducting search-and-destroy operations in areas of Jaffna brought under government control and the authorities expected thousands of Tamil civilians who fled the fighting to return home.

Tens of thousands of men, women and children have taken shelter in areas of the north still under rebel control. However, the LTTE has said that those who leave their territory will be considered "traitors."

Defence analysts say that the LTTE will be able to carry out hit-and-run attacks against the military only if Tiger cadres can slip back to Jaffna under the cover of civilians.

Shortly after the capture of Jaffna, President Kumaratunga announced that security forces would undertake another offensive to secure a land route to the Jaffna Peninsula.

Some 35,000 security personnel in Jaffna are currently being supplied by the tiny air force and the navy because all land access to the region are controlled by the guerrillas.

Officials said that rehabilitation work in Jaffna has already begun in a bid to woo the Tamil civilians back.

The latest round of fighting broke out when the LTTE pulled out of a truce with Ms. Kumaratunga in April last year and resumed its guerrilla campaign, which has claimed over 50,000 lives in the past 23 years.

Russia sends fresh troops to Chechenya

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russia has started sending fresh, better trained troops to Chechenya to replace those who have already served 18 months, the deputy head of the Russian military command in the breakaway Caucasus republic said Wednesday.

General Vladimir Shamanov told ITAR-TASS news agency that the military command had "taken account of bitter past experience" in selecting the new troops for service in Chechenya.

"We are not allowing insufficiently trained, physically weak lads to serve in hotspots," said Gen Shamanov.

Instead of the mandatory two years of service, troops sent to hotspots serve 18 months.

Gen. Shamanov did not specify how many new troops were arriving in Chechenya.

He said great attention had also been paid to psychological training. All the units sending fresh troops to Chechenya had run special courses geared to service in hotspots.

The military command had drawn up a special timetable to speed up replacement of troops who had served 18 months in Chechenya, he said.

According to the interior ministry, 30,000 to 40,000 civilians have been killed in the Chechenya war.

Mexico welcomes moves by guerrillas to create political wing

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — The Mexican government has welcomed moves by Zapatista guerrillas in the impoverished south to create a political wing, but stressed that the rebel group must renounce violence.

"Any contribution to the goal of building democracy is welcome," Deputy Interior Minister Arturo Nunez said Tuesday in the first official reaction to Monday's announcement by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN).

While the decision concurred with the spirit of the law for Chiapas passed in 1995 to bring peace to the region, Mr. Nunez said, "it is a necessary condition that the EZLN lay down its weapons."

Mr. Nunez regretted that the EZLN statement did not include a promise to renounce violence as a means to achieve their goals of social reform.

EZLN leader Subcomandante Marcos chose the second anniversary of the rebel uprising in Chiapas to announce his group was forming a political wing to work for democratic reform.

Mr. Marcos said that the new group, called the Zapatista National Liberation Front, would reject armed confrontation and party politics but seek instead to become a peaceful, grassroots organisation.

The group will work for the "transformation of Mexico into a democracy" and lobby for the drafting of a new constitution, according to the Marcos statement, which was read by a rebel commander to some 2,000 people gathered at Oventic, a Tzotzil Indian village in Chiapas now turned into a Zapatista cultural centre.

"The Zapatista army will not disappear but will enter a new stage and their main effort will be the political struggle and will participate directly in the formation of the political Zapatista front," Mr. Marcos said in his statement.

Mr. Nunez said the government would continue to press for disarmament in the next round of negotiations with EZLN leaders set to begin Jan. 10 in Chiapas. The often interrupted peace negotiations began in April of last year.

The EZLN announcement also drew praise from the Roman Catholic church, which has served as mediator in the peace talks.

Tapachula Bishop Felipe Arizmendi called the Zapatista decision "one of the best news of the new year ... "it is a sign that peace is closer at hand and poses a more stable solution to the conflict."

Some experts in indigenous affairs, however, had misgivings about the Zapatista's aspiration to legitimacy, noting it would be very difficult while the group continued to operate as a clandestine army.

The observers also questioned how Mr. Marcos' group could hope to promote significant reforms in Mexico while openly renouncing political power.

Members of the leftist democratic Revolution Party said the new organisation the Zapatistas have proposed "is exclusive, does not accept people aspiring to elected office and ... nobody really knows what it is setting out to do."

Zapatista rebels rose up against the government on Jan. 1, 1994, calling for better living conditions for Chiapa state's overwhelmingly ethnic Maya population living in isolated towns in the rugged hills of the region.

Tensions have been high in Chiapas ahead of the anniversary, amid fears of a fresh outbreak of violence.

The Zapatistas considered declaring a "red alert" in the face of heightened activity by federal troops, who the government said were merely distributing food and gifts for the holidays.

There has been little or no fighting in Chiapas since a ceasefire went into effect on Jan. 12.

Since then, the Zapatistas have been penned into a swath of territory on the Guatemalan border, militarily isolated, but newspapers regularly carry the statements of Mr. Marcos, a nom de guerre for the rebel chief.

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Bureau with problems

THE AUDIT Bureau's (AB) report covering the year 1994, that was submitted to Parliament this week, paints a bleak picture about government handling of public funds.

The report registers 2,750 violations against the laws of the land by the government and its different agencies. Funds embezzled by bureaucrats and civil servants during the year amounted to JD 1 million. Furthermore, the Treasury is involved in 1,133 cases in which some JD 34.74 million is owed the government by certain individuals and companies.

The Bureau's report lists many recommendations, that it issues every year, outlining ways and means to combat corruption and laxity in government practices. For instance, the Bureau calls for activating the mandate of control mechanisms at the different ministries and departments to stem graft and the squandering of public funds. It also calls on the different public institutions to tighten their monitoring policies to ensure optimal utilisation of the country's meagre resources.

But by reviewing the Bureau's successive reports in the past years it appears that neither the Bureau, nor the Parliament nor the government have the will or the legal tools to make effective use of the recommendations, whether those that concern government functioning or the proper disbursement of funds.

What might be considered as a short-term solution is expanding the mandate of the Bureau to include not only the authority to collect information from all the pertinent sources, something that the AB is complaining it cannot accomplish anyway, but also the power to enforce corrective measures where they are needed.

The Parliament, which is due to look into the report shortly, might see a problem or two with this approach, especially when ministers constantly complain of unnecessary complications added to their work by the way the Bureau conducts its investigations and by the extra bureaucratic measures that have to be taken in order to satisfy its demands. But what the honourable members of Parliament, or the government itself, cannot do is to ignore the fact that we have a big problem here. This problem, they well know, will not just disappear if we do not do something about it.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in **Al Ra'i** said the way in which European countries deal with Israel is very different from the way they do with Jordan, suggeting that these countries favour Israel. Tareq Masarweh said while a German firm has concluded a deal with Israel for extracting manganese from the Dead Sea and an American company reached an agreement for setting up a $1.2 billion plant, Jordan is not offered any business of this kind. The Europeans are satisfied with offering Jordan soft loans, and we are satisfied with making speeches and organising seminars, but are not given any of the opportunities that might help us achieve real development, said the writer. Jordan, which owns half the Dead Sea, modern hospitals and hotels, has more than 32,000 engineers and offers facilities and incentives to investors, ought to be given a chance in business too, said the writer. He said that efforts should be made to convince the Europeans and the Americans of our ability to be partners in business, and that we are capable of handling industrial and other projects. He said Jordan should not suffice itself with expertise from Germany helping us to develop agriculture but rather also seek joint industries. He called for less speeches and more business like discussions with our European friends in order to secure investments.

A WRITER in **Al Dustour** drew attention to the question that was raised twice in parliament by deputy Nazih Ammarin, concerning the increase in the prices of medicine and the absence of certain kinds of drugs from the market. Nazih Ammarin is a medical doctor who knows better than other deputies how painful these questions are and realises the need for Parliament to take measures designed to help the patients and be fair to the public, especially the needy people, said Mohammad Sbeihi. Every year Parliament takes up the subject of drug prices but has to date failed to reach a fair solution. Nor has the government taken a firm step to end the monopoly of greedy drug store owners whose main objective is to make profit no matter how, said the writer.

The View from Academia

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

The contemporary Arabic song and the contemporary Arab scene

MANY PEOPLE in our society are extremely dissatisfied with the quality of the contemporary Arabic song. To them, today's Arabic song and today's Arab singer not only fall extremely short of the audience's expectations but they miserably fail as art and artist, respectively. While there is some obvious truth in such a claim, there is also a great deal of distortion and unfairness. This is one thing. The second thing is that what is happening with respect to the Arab song, singer and audience is a metaphor for what is happening within the Arab society at large.

Ask anyone who is, say, 35 and above (ordinary people, song critics and even — ironically — singers) what they think of the contemporary Arabic song, they almost all tell you they are unhappy with it. The music is no good, the voice of the singer is no good, and the words are no good. Some will go as far as to say that with the death of Umm Kulthoum, Abdul Wahhab, Abdul Halim and Fareed Al Atrash, the Arabic song died. "What do you have today?" they ask rhetorically and reductively, and then answer, without waiting to hear your opinion, "odd sounds and noises, and clowns jumping up and down. There is no beauty, no joy and no art. Where are the midgets of today from the giants of yesterday?"

To be sure, there is some justification for such dissatisfaction. Many songs and many singers are not acceptable by any standards. Some singers are simply in the wrong profession. A loud voice, an aggressive personality and an able body do not necessarily entitle a person to be a singer, not even if he is provided (and alas he often is) with the most sophisticated, top-of-the line sound system. I have had the misfortune many a time, especially at weddings of dear relatives and friends, to listen to a "singer" who is clearly not a singer at all, and go home almost deaf and with headaches which last for weeks. Such a person would have definitely made a good wrestler, a good boxer, a good bullfighter or a good bulldozer driver, but not a singer. Those people who have advised him, or given him the chance, to pursue a career in singing have obviously done him and his audience a great deal of harm and injustice.

But this problem is not confined to singing. Rather, it extends to encompass what goes on in almost all other societal spheres. Clearly, there is something seriously wrong with our society's screening system. The sieve through which we pass individuals has holes which are a little too large and too accommodating. This is a sad sociological fact which applies as much to our engineers, doctors, university professors, radio and TV presenters, MPs, teachers, taxi drivers, preachers, civil servants, boxers, soccer players, poets, novelists, hairstylists, mechanics and carpenters as to our singers. Our present-day society is a little too permissive; and individuals therefore choose whatever is available, especially if it does not require much training and intellectual effort and especially if they have someone who can pull the strings for them. To speak more plainly, just as it is easy for anyone with an aggressive personality and a loud voice to become a singer, it is easy for anyone who is pushy enough to become an engineer, a doctor, a university professor, an MP, a carpenter, a journalist, a poet, etc. What this means, of course, is that some of our mediocre engineers would have made excellent singers, some of our teachers excellent boxers, and some of our poets excellent mechanics. We blame it all on the sieve.

But such bad "singers" are also there in order to fill a gap and fulfill a need. People have weddings (all too many of them), and naturally they need to entertain themselves and their guests. After all, it is once in a life-time. And when you pay JD 200-400 for the hall, the chairs, the tables, the sheets, the cake, the juice, the band and the singer, you can't be too picky. Such "stunt" singers (I can't think of a better word to describe them) are cheap, are on call 24 hours a day, come in all shapes and sizes, and are ready to sing any song any time anywhere. What more do you want?

Some of these stunt singers are often elevated to a higher status and are invited to prestigious hotels and nation-wide concerts, out of need again. A famous singer is invited to sing at a famous hotel or a famous charity concert. The concert is to last for two or three hours. Obviously, the said star cannot sing for the whole duration of the concert. He/she can only sing for an hour. So what do you do? Easy. Bring a stunt singer or two to kill time and keep the audience busy the first hour or two.

A few years ago, upon the insistence of a dear guest of mine I attended a charity concert. "It will be fun. Besides, it is for a good cause. And the singer is really good," he pleaded. I accepted the invitation. It was my first experience with this sort of thing. When we went into the hall, which was actually a gymnasium, it was packed with people, mainly youngsters. We sat in the back rows waiting for the famous male singer from a neighbouring country to show up. I had heard his songs on the radio and TV and thought they were okay. The band started playing, and a female figure (tall and skinny) walked into the microphone. Some people in the audience applauded (out of courtesy, it turned out), while others whistled disapprovingly. I asked my guest what the problem was; he said there was no problem. "Don't you know? This is the custom." He explained. Before the main singer showed up, a little known or unknown singer sang first to get things started.

When the female singer began singing and gesturing enthusiastically, everybody got into the mood and started singing. At the end of her fourth song, the audience (who clearly hated her guts) clapped for a long time, hinting that she should stop and leave. But she did not. Unwittingly mistaking the goodbye applause for admiration or deliberately ignoring the wish of the audience (I could never figure that out) she started the next song as enthusiastically and with as big a smile and loud a voice as ever. The audience whistled disapprovingly for a while, then they got into it again. The same ritual was repeated with every song she sang. After an hour and a half, the male singer showed up and sang for 45 minutes. He was good. Beautiful voice, charming personality, meaningful words and nice music. The audience, the anger and impatience over, responded with genuine appreciation and joy.

Much can be said about this peculiar but interesting phenomenon: about the behaviour of an aggressive and shameless singer who does not give a damn whether the audience approves or disapproves, about an audience who is forced to enjoy something they do not relish, about the strange mixing of something vulgar and abusive and something truly appealing and refined. "Isn't this all metaphoric? Does not this event exemplify shocking social realities?" I said to myself.

How long is the Arab World going to applaud mediocrity while hating it in its heart of hearts? When will it take a stand and refuse to listen or applaud even for one minute (not to say an hour and half) for a tall, skinny, vulgar and shameless performer? When will it demand excellence the whole time and not just part of the time? When will it assert its presence?

How long will the organisers among us keep not only lumping the good and the bad together in a mad, idiotic concert, but also give priority to the bad? How long are we going to allow the stunts to guide and lead? I look around me in the great Arab homeland of today and I see more stunts than actual players, actors and singers. Do you mean to tell me that we do not have among us people who can make first-rate TV presenters? Who know how to ask an intelligent question, make a perceptive comment, engage in a fruitful dialogue (naturally and smoothly) and speak with a soft voice? Do you mean to tell me we do not have among us individuals who can make first-rate teachers at our public schools and excel in their performance even if their pay is humble; if the overall atmosphere is a bit more congenial, healthier and appreciative? We have given priority to the stunts. And we deserve what we get.

Having said this, however, I wish to stress the following specific points:

1. There is a difference (a big difference) between stunt singers and their likes and the many truly good singers of today. Many of our commentators about the contemporary Arabic song and singer are guilty of lumping together the good and the bad when they speak about the contemporary Arabic song or singer. In other words, there is something extremely false about saying "song" or "singer" (i.e. when we use the singular), for we have songs and singers, some good and excellent and some bad and awful. Our singers are like our teachers, engineers, doctors, preachers and carpenters. Some are exceptional and admirable; others are mediocre and poor. That is the way it is with everything in the Arab World of today. But this should not blind us to the fact that the good and excellent are there, even though they may occupy the back seat or their role is marginalised and unrecognised. We have excellent singers today, people who are ultimately as valuable as the giants of yesterday.

The question of genre must be taken into account here. In literature, we distinguish between an epic and a lyric. While some old-fashioned critics may view the epic as superior to the lyric, most open-minded critics reject value judgement and accept the two as equally creative, distinguished and interesting. The same thing can be said about the song. Is Umm Kulthoum good and superior (and I really like her songs) because she sings long songs, and are the new generation of singers inferior because they sing short songs? This is the impression one gets when one listens to many commentators. What about Fayrouz? Shakespeare himself has written mainly sonnets. Does that make him less distinguished than Spenser or Chaucer? Many reservations about contemporary Arab songs are genre-based. And we often underestimate ourselves and our achievement because of this.

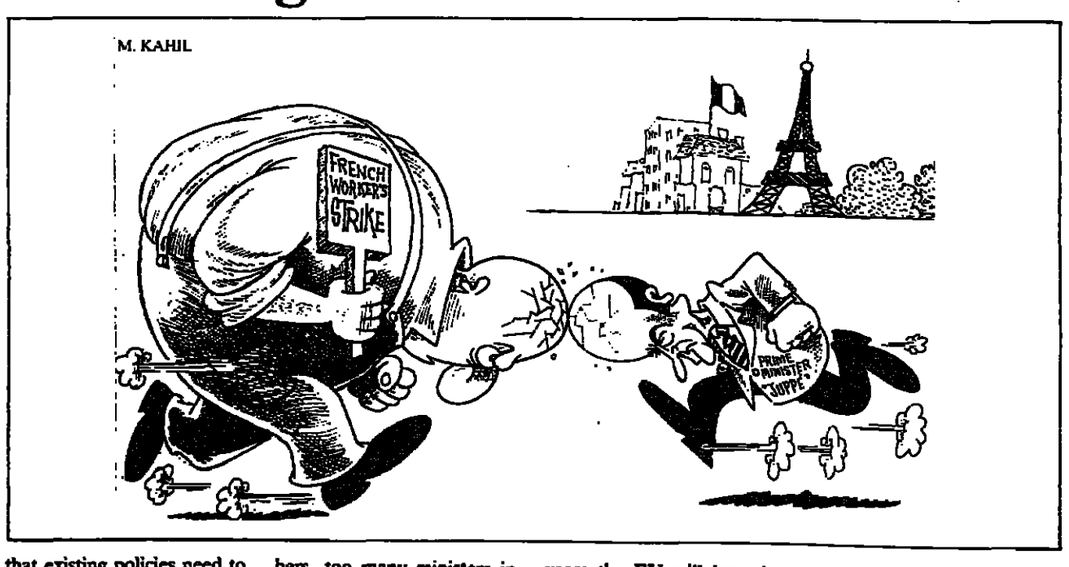
2. Who decides whether a song or a singer is good or bad? Ultimately, the audience, of course. What audience? Well, undoubtedly taste varies from one person to another, from one region to another, from one Arab country to another, and from one generation to another. Pluralism is a fact in today's Arab World. It is interesting to note that in the event narrated above the vast majority of the spectators (more than a thousand) were youngsters. To them, the said singer is more exciting and interesting than Umm Kulthoum and Abdul Wahhab. "I cannot bear to listen to Umm Kulthoum for a minute," says a young acquaintance of mine who is totally in love with contemporary Arabic songs. Her mother, who adores Abdul Wahhab, cannot bear to listen to the contemporary singers for two minutes. Who is right? The vast majority of our commentators, who belong to an older generation, ought to take the preferences of the younger generation (which is often not consulted or asked to express its opinion) into account. Many of the so-called midgets of today are giants in the eyes of our younger generations. Is a singer at the Jerash Festival who keeps thousands of people for hours on their feet clapping and singing or listening attentively a midget? I do not think so. Admittedly, a small percentage of the audience will jump and applaud at hearing anything and anybody. But most spectators are fussy and picky and demand excellence, young though they may be. Isn't the discrepancy between the tastes of the young and the tastes of the old itself significant? Isn't our present-day Arab society somewhat exaggeratedly attached to the old and the past and somewhat unwisely dismissive and oppressive of the young (young in taste and thought, that is, not in years)? What is wrong with Majida Al Roumi, Marwan Husam Addin, Shadi Jameel and Marwan Al Abdallat (to mention a few names)? Are they not great in their own way?

The question of regionalism may also be crucial today. Once upon a time (i.e. in the fifties, sixties and seventies), Egypt dominated the scene; and it is interesting to note that almost all of the giants were either Egyptian or based in Egypt. Today, the Arab political, social, economic and cultural map is extremely different from what it was in the said decades. Whether we like it or not, each and every Arab country is looking after its interests and is developing its own mini-culture. This phenomenon will obviously reflect on the Arab song, and we have started to hear more of the Moroccan, Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese, Qatari and Egyptian song than of the "Arab" song. This is a reality which must be reckoned with in our assessment of the contemporary "Arab" song and the contemporary Arab culture. There is a strong parallel between those who refuse to recognise anyone other than Umm Kulthoum, Abdul Wahhab and Abdul Halim and those who refuse to accept any basis for Arab relations other than Arab nationalism. Can't one love Umm Kulthoum and leave some room for other contemporary Arab singers? Can't one cherish Arab nationalism as a feeling but see another more solid basis for Arab-Arab relations (i.e. serious coordination)? Of course one can.

We need to be more open-minded and more fair in our assessment of the contemporary Arab song, Arab singer and Arab scene, and a little more discriminate and appreciative. There is some real nonsense going on, but there is also some real art and sense at all levels.

By Franklin Dehousse

In deciding to push east, the EU has signed its death warrant



BRUSSELS — For those who cannot stand the European Union (EU), the hour of revenge seems to be approaching. Within a few years, not much will be left of the European construction in its present form. It so happens that, by deciding to enlarge the European Union with just about all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the EU leaders have signed a death warrant for the European Community as conceived by Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman and Walter Hallstein after World War II.

This new enlargement will raise tremendous difficulties. Most of the new candidates are very different from the current member states. They are much less rich. They have only limited experience in democratic government (and even less in negotiating in supranational institutions). Their economies and societies are markedly different from ours.

The accession of these states will also prompt profound restructuring of private enterprises, there and here. If you found competition from the Spanish and Portuguese work force hard to cope with, then hold on tight for an extremely rough ride with Polish and Bulgarian workers. Competition from the south of Europe will become a distant and almost sweet memory.

It will also be impossible to continue the existing European policies after this accession, certainly not the Common Agricultural Policy and the regional development policy. If we want to extend these policies to the whole continent, we would more or less triple the community budget. For the moment, nobody even dares think about that.

Consequently, it is clear that existing policies need to be reformed. The existing resources will have to be distributed among far more parties, which leads to the obvious conclusion that current member states will receive less.

Finally, this new enlargement will almost double the number of member states. This is an insurmountable obstacle for the existing community system, which was originally created in the 1950s for only six member states. At 25 or 30, the current institutional system would be completely unmanageable.

For starters, the institutions will need to order extraordinarily long meeting tables since there will be too many of everyone: too many commissioners, too many European Parliament members, too many ministers in the council and too many judges in Luxembourg.

The decision-making procedures will become completely impracticable. Even if every member state's representative were to speak for only 10 minutes, an introductory discussion on the smallest issue would last five hours.

All this is not unavoidable, although there is only one real solution: Let's call in all the gurus of management, from Tom Peters to Peter Druckner, and introduce a radical simplification of all institutions and all the decision-making procedures. After having told so many others that they need structural adjustment, it is now up to the European Union to adjust itself. If not, within 10 years the EU will have become a second Council of Europe, with an overdeveloped administration.

This would also imply — and this should be very clear — that the EU will never become more than a simple free-trade zone, albeit one covering the whole Continent. It would be completely impossible to reach agreement on measures concerning social policy, the environment or financial transfers.

This inevitable rationalisation of the institutions will be hampered by great difficulties. First, nobody likes to abolish certain rather interesting career opportunities. Jobs are bound to disappear, at the commission as well as in the European Parliament. Second, "lightening up" the institutional structures of the EU would necessitate important transfers of sovereignty.

Accepting qualified majority voting (or the possibility of being outvoted) was all in all a limited concession in 1957. It concerned only a few areas and there were only six of us at first and 12 later. Now, however, there is talk of qualified majority voting as a general rule in a Europe of 20 or 30 member states. The possibility of being outvoted therefore becomes much more likely and much less predictable.

In a larger union, all member states, including the largest, will have less weight. All the traditional axes, from the famous Franco-German couple to the old ménage à trois of the Benelux countries to the olive belt of the Mediterranean, will see their influence curtailed.

In the future Europe, Poland will have the same number of votes as Spain, and Romania as many as the Netherlands and Belgium combined.

This perspective explains why, nowadays, doubts are being raised even in countries and circles that are traditionally pro-European. Of course, the political stakes of the debate are growing higher and higher. As a matter of fact, the first thing we need to do is to define the kind of society we want.

All this does not make the accession of new members from East and Central Europe less necessary. The EU remains a highly successful peacekeeping operation on a continent that has been torn by war for centuries. Enlargement is certainly the best way to guarantee the economic and political stability of these countries. At the same time, it offers considerable possibilities for economic development. Finally, developing stronger ties with these countries is the only thing we can do to avoid their becoming breeding grounds for environmental disaster and military instability.

There is, however, a price to be paid. It's said that something needs to change if we don't want anything to change. For the European Union, however, the more likely conclusion seems to be that everything needs to change if we want anything to survive. That fundamental is what is at stake at the EU Intergovernmental Conference of 1996.

The writer is Belgium's representative at the Reflection Group for the preparation of the Intergovernmental Conference of 1996. This comment is reprinted from the Herald Tribune.

Diana's shock treatment jolts British monarchy

By Allen Nacheman
Agence France Presse

London — Britain's stodgy old monarchy got high voltage shock treatment in 1995 from a demure little fairytale princess who suddenly burst out of her cocoon with a roar heard round the world.

Neither Princess Diana, sweet and silent since she married Prince Charles in a storybook wedding in 1981 when she was 19, nor Buckingham Palace, would ever be quite the same after "that interview."

Aired Nov. 20 on BBC TV's Panorama program, it sent shock waves through the kingdom with its revelations of adultery and poisonous royal in-fighting, and a month later Queen Elizabeth II's patience snapped.

In a dramatic gesture, she sent a letter to her eldest son and her daughter-in-law pressing them to divorce as soon as possible.

After three years of bitter separation, Princess Diana's confessions had plunged the final knife into their tattered marriage.

For Prince Charles, this forced a wrenching decision: to avert a looming constitutional crisis, he declared he had "no intention" of remarrying after a divorce with Princess Diana, ruling out a wedding with the love of his life, Camilla Parker-Bowles.

Diana, furious that the queen's bombshell letter was leaked to the press, refused to give an answer: but her friends privately admitted that a divorce was inevitable after her shock revelations.

In a monarchy where tradition and appearance are everything, where word and gesture are orchestrated and where dirty linen is not aired in public, Princess Diana had calmly told Britain and the world that she had:

— cheated on her husband years before they separated in 1992;

— known all along that Charles was cheating on her with an old flame;

— suffered bulemia and morbid post-natal depression;

— intentionally injured herself to gain sympathy and attention;

— been the target of a sinister vendetta by royal household minions.

In the 55-minute interview, seen by some 200 million viewers in dozens of countries, Princess Diana had also said she did not want a divorce, but was awaiting "my husband's decision."

She did not see herself as ever sitting on the throne beside Prince Charles, she said, but did fancy a role as roving ambassador for Britain, a "queen of people's hearts."

She "won't go quietly," she said, and would "fight to the end" for her role within the monarchy because "I've got two children to bring up."

And, in a final lunge to the royal jugular, Princess Diana said Prince Charles might not make such a great king after all because the job "would bring enormous limitations to him, and I don't know whether he could adapt to that."

The interview hit Buckingham Palace like a cruise missile.

Not even Queen Elizabeth had been forewarned until a week before the broadcast, when the BBC issued a press release that gave no hint of the dynamite contained in the interview recorded under military-style secrecy weeks earlier.

Prince Charles' life-long friend, Armed Forces Minister Nicholas Soames, charged to the defense, saying Princess Diana was obviously in the "advanced stages of paranoia."

Prime Minister John Major told him in effect to shut up, and told the House Of Commons the government wasn't about to involve itself in this family affair.

Recovering from apoplexy, the palace quickly geared up for damage control. The princess was now a loose cannon. They needed to know: "what does Diana want?"

Twelve hours after the broadcast, the palace issued a statement: they would like to hold talks with the princess "to help her define her future role and continue to support her as a member of the royal family."

Princess Diana was meanwhile off to Argentina on an already-organised high profile visit that included seven hospitals and insults from the mother of a soldier killed in the Falkland Islands war."

Argentine President Carlos Menem said she would make a fine ambassador.

Back home, Princess Diana made clear she intended to stay in the headlines and manage her press coverage as never before.

She arranged a late-night photo shoot of her leaving a London hospital, then explained to a tabloid that she frequently visited hospitals at night to comfort terminally ill patients.

"Queen of hearts," trumpeted virtually every paper the following day.

She made a slight political misstep, appearing on the same platform with an opposition Labour official critical of the treatment of the homeless. She was roundly rebuked by Tory MPs for meddling in politics.

Then she was off to New York where, in a black-sequined gown with plunging neckline, she accepted a "Humanitarian of the Year" award for charitable work.

She rubbed elbows with such American glitterati as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and General Colin Powell, the former chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, with whom she laughingly acknowledged a distant blood tie.

Gen. Powell, once a leading presidential hopeful, is black. And, speaking to a $1,000-a-plate charity dinner, Princess Diana adroitly dispatched a woman heckler wanting to know, "Where are your children?"

"At school," Diana replied, never missing her cadence.

Even after a divorce, the princess would be unlikely ever to slip into obscurity.

Senior royal sources have said the palace is ready to deal, to link Diana's new public role — possibly "ambassadorial" — with a divorce settlement.

And as the mother of the future king, william, now aged 13, she will be guaranteed a high public profile.

Meanwhile reports said divorcee Camilla Parker-Bowles was "infuriated" by Charles' announcement last week that he would never remarry.

They said she was determined to marry the prince and become his consort.

Princess Diana

JENNIFER HAMARNEH IS STILL ON HOLIDAY

Pop star, former Bosnia chief, Orkney Blacksmith honoured

LONDON (AFP) — The pop star Elton John, the former U.N. commander in Bosnia, and a rural blacksmith were among those who received honours from Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister John Major for services rendered to the country.

Elton John, who was crowned the "Liberace of pop" by his fans because of his flamboyant costumes and outrageous spectacles, received a CBE in the new year honours list.

Lieutenant General Rupert Smith, the veteran paratrooper and Gulf war hero who last week handed over command in Bosnia to a NATO-led force, was knighted by the queen.

And a rural blacksmith, John Carsie, who at 75 years old is still working full-time in the Orkney Islands off the Scottish coast was awarded an MBE.

The award is a turn-around in the fortunes of Elton John, whose hits include Crocodile Rock, Don't Go Breaking My Heart and Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me.

Last year he was knocked off number one spot as the richest pop star in Britain by former Genesis drummer Phil Collins, with an income of just $19 million.

He is a regular visitor to the royal family at Windsor Castle and made a joke about his own kitsch public image by saying of her royal highness, "We get on fine—two queens together."

But for Mr. Carsie, who is not so well versed in the ways of the royal household, the announcement that he was to receive an honour came as a great surprise.

"I wasn't sure whether it was a hoax or not. But I've no idea who put my name forward," said the blacksmith, who started work in his father's forge at Orphir, Orkney, in 1934.

At 52, Rupert Smith won great praise for his command in the former Yugoslavia, where his tough no-nonsense stance is widely seen as playing a key role in bringing the four year civil war to an end.

He won the queen's Gallantry Medal while on service in Northern Ireland, where he pulled a colleague from under the wreckage of a car bomb, dousing the flames with his own body.

Elsewhere, James Molyneaux, who recently retired as leader of the Ulster Unionists, became a Knight Commander Of The Order Of The British Empire.

An unexpected knighthood went to Tory Backbencher Michael Spicer, one of the ringleaders of the backbench rebellion against the European Union's Maastricht union treaty.

Only last week, the 52-year-old ex-minister contributed to a humiliating defeat of the Major government over European fisheries policy by turning up too late to vote.

One third of the 1,036 award-winners were women. They included Stella Rimington, the head of Britain's Security Services, who becomes a Dame, and Julie Goodyear, former star of the popular TV series Coronation Street, who receives an MBE weeks after she quit the show after 25 years and 2,002 episodes.

Brecht disciple, Heiner Mueller, dies

BERLIN (AFP) — Heiner Mueller, playwright and director of the prestigious Berliner Ensemble, died last week of cancer, aged 66, officials of the theatre announced.

A disciple of the ensemble's founder Bertolt Brecht, Mueller lived and worked in the former East Germany until the state's collapse and merger with the German Federal Republic.

A convinced Marxist, Mueller was born at Eppendorf, in Eastern Germany. His writing was often critical of the contradictions in the Communist state and he was banned from having work produced there for several years. Plays such as "Population Transfer" or "Life in the Fields" were ignored by the authorities or performed by amateur groups.

He became famous in Federal Germany and abroad for such productions as "Hamlet-Machine" and "Germania, Death in Berlin", and for directing Richard Wagner's opera "Tristan and Yseult".

He became the ensemble's artistic director in March 1995 and despite an operation for cancer and a prolonged absence in the United States had prepared detailed programmes for the 1995-96 season based on the history and theatre of the former East Germany and a specific programme for 1997-98 to mark the centenary of Brecht's birth.

German dramatist and theatre director Heiner Mueller shown in a file photo taken

After slow start, fast food wins over tastes in Italy

By Frances d'Emilio
Associated Press

ROME — After a slow start, fast food is eating away at Italian resistance to practically anything but pasta on the plate.

While nobody's hanging up spaghetti colanders for good, neither is anybody still insisting that burger outlets in Italy are a passing fad.

"We're very sure" fast food is here to stay, said Stefano Secchi, marketing director for Burghy, an Italian hamburger chain.

"I believe the number of fast foods will double in two years." we're not talking thousands, or even hundreds of places. Still, even scores more is no small potatoes in a country where actresses joined union leaders to dish out free pasta just 10 years ago to protest the arrival of a McDonald's off the Spanish Steps, a sweeping staircase that is one of Rome's most popular landmarks.

McDonald's didn't even venture into Italy until 1985 - 13 years after the French started putting away big Macs. France had 384 McDonald's by the end of August, compared to 28 in Italy, a neighbour with approximately the same population and similarly sacred culinary traditions.

"Italy was one of the last countries where McDonald's were opened up because it didn't have the flexibility required," said Alessandra di Montezemolo, a spokeswoman for the company in Italy.

Fast-food companies tick off a trio of obstacles to development in Italy: sky-high rents in historic centres; layers of Italian bureaucracy to unpeel before obtaining permits, and politically powerful labor unions.

Until 1985, Italy virtually didn't permit part-time work or apprenticeships.

"You've got to have labour in line with peaks and lows" of customers, said Jacques Bahbout, an Egyptian-born Frenchman who opened the McDonald's off the Spanish Steps in 1986.

For employers, the new law - enacted to fight high youth unemployment - also meant savings on some of the world's highest-payroll taxes and the possibility to fire workers who didn't learn the job.

Taking on a full-time employee in Italy means "you're practically married to the guy," said another fast-food pioneer, Saverio Solimeo.

In 1987, he opened a McDonald's in Bologna, the heart of Italy's "red belt," where leftists, and leftist-led unions, were traditionally strong.

"Now things are changed. Unions are more willing to let you hire" part-timers, said Mr. Solimeo, a Roman who grew up in the United States.

Mr. Bahbout, who has four McDonald's in Rome and is opening at least two others, says he employs 700 people and has a waiting list of 8,000.

While labour problems seem to be fading, bureaucracy is alive as ever. It took Mr. Bahbout nearly five years to open one of his locations.

Compared to those hurdles, adapting to Italians' food habits was almost easy.

"Everyone thought we'd last six months or a year," said Mr. Solimeo.

But with many city workers reluctant to brave traffic jams to go home for three-hour lunch breaks, alternatives to expensive and slow-serving trattoria have dug out a niche.

Fast food is "no longer such a fad," said Manola de Signore, a young Roman taking her aunt and uncle to lunch at Burghy, where outdoor tables take in a view of the Pantheon. "It's for the convenience, the time."

A simple meal of pasta, meat and dessert in a modest Roman trattoria easily can cost more than $20 a head. A fast-food hamburger, fries, salad, cake and beer go for about half that.

Mr. Bahbout introduced cold salads of pasta, rice or greens and added some familiar dishes like "insalata caprese," mozzarella and tomatoes drizzled with oil.

"I needed a kind of bridge between two cultures," said Mr. Bahbout. But he believes Italians were ready for fast food all along.

"I know of no other country that has so many (coffee) bars and 'tramezzini,'" the triangular-shaped, crustless sandwiches that millions of Italians wolf down every day for lunch. "People eat on their feet. It was the hamburger aspect that was different."

No Egyptian art for St. Petersburg museum despite deal

ST. PETERSBURG, Florida (R) — The museum has already sold 82,000 tickets to lovers of ancient Egyptian artifacts. Local shops and restaurants are primed, and a series of gala parties are planned and ready to go.

But the Egyptian government says the priceless objects, including sarcophagi and 5,000-year-old statues, may not go on display January 10 in the Florida International Museum as scheduled.

Abulhalim Nourreddin, chairman of the Egyptian Supreme Antiquities Council told Reuters that the museum had violated a $10 million agreement to display the art in a five-city American tour.

"We told everyone it would be five cities at $2 million each. They have violated the agreement," he said in Cairo. "Suddenly they told us it was only one city."

Officials at the Florida International Museum say the Egyptian government raised the issue of a five-city deal only on Dec. 11, just before a final contract was to be signed.

The exhibition director, James Broughton, said St. Petersburg could only be responsible for its own exhibition and a $2 million fee, but said he would try to interest other U.S. cities in the Egyptian display. So far, Mr. Broughton said he has letters of interest but no firm contracts with museums in Portland, Oregon, Topeka, Kansas, and Denver.

Mr. Nourreddin left open the possibility of some resolution to the dispute. "We are discussing the issue," he said. "The whole matter was submitted to committees and they are studying it. We need two or three days to decide."

Local shops and restaurants near the museum said they were stunned to learn that that a final contract for the exhibit had not been signed by the Egyptian government and the museum.

"It's catastrophic," said Craig van Pelt, owner of the Museum Galleria. "Our whole business depends on the museum. We're all irate as taxpayers that we could have been misled by city leaders. Whoever heard of a multi-million-dollar (deal) with no contract?"

St. Petersburg council woman Leslie Curran said the museum exhibit's failure to open on schedule would have "a major impact" on the city, which successfully hosted the "treasures of the czars" exhibit earlier this year that drew more than 600,000 visitors.

The world of digital photography

By Jean-Claude Elias

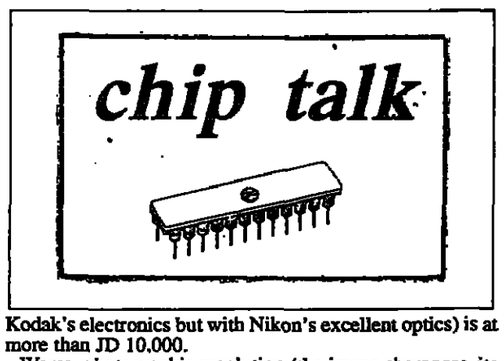
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY (DP) is one of the fastest growing field of application in the world of personal computing. It is not to be confused with the simpler computer drawing or graphics that most users have access to thanks to well-known software like PC Paintbrush, CorelDraw and the like.

DP consists of taking real, live pictures with a special camera. The main body and the optics of the camera are similar to those found on traditional equipment, but instead of storing the captured shot on usual film roll, the camera memorises it in its computer-like memory chips. Most models can store 20 to 40 frames (photographs) at one time. The camera can then be connected to a PC and the photographs transferred to the computer's memory and disk for viewing, printing or further processing.

The advantages are obvious. There are no expensive rolls or prints to buy or process and one obtains instant gratification by displaying the photos on the PC screen immediately after shooting them. Using special software, like the wonderful Adobe Photoshop, for example, it is also possible to edit photographs.

The programme's possibilities are only limited by one's imagination — changing the contrast, altering the colours, modifying the brilliance, cropping the image size, erasing portions of it, pasting together portions from different photographs, and so forth, can tremendously enhance or on the contrary alter beyond recognition any shot.

Alas, for the time being weaknesses in DP may be as many and as important as its advantages. Digital cameras are still expensive. The entry level Kodak Model 40 costs more than JD 1,000 and the Nikon system (based on



Kodak's electronics but with Nikon's excellent optics) is at more than JD 10,000.

Worse, photographic resolution (the image sharpness, its main quality) is nowhere near the magnificence of the legendary Kodachrome slides. Colours, on the other hand, are very real and most computers applications users will find the resolution more than acceptable.

The average digital photograph will occupy 10 to 20 MB (million bytes or characters) on the computer's hard disk. With the available technology, photos with better resolution will eat up as much as 80 or 100 MB each.

The current size and prices of hard disks will not allow anybody to store the family album on computer.

The days of the traditional film are not in danger for the time being and amateurs will continue loading their cameras with celluloid rolls.

However, when big names like Kodak and Nikon are promoting and pushing DP, who can tell what will happen in five or 10 years from now?

One foot in the past

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen

THESE DAYS, so many things pass us by so quickly and so briefly that we hardly take notice of them even though we are constantly reminded of them as we watch the news or as we read through the day's newspapers.

With this information, comes - one could argue - a reminder that the world moves on, with, or without us. Another such reminder is of the need to continue to be, to work, to give, and to build a better future in a spirit of optimism, hope, patience and persistence. Hope that we have managed to take a few steps forward during the past twelve months. Or have we?

We should not be interested in who did what and when, or who visited what place and with whom! What we need to do is to synthesise the year's events in a manner whereby it becomes easier to say, for example, that we started out with the goal to achieve so much, but only managed to fulfil some 40 per cent or 80 per cent of our aims.

What is essential is that at the beginning of 1996, we are able to honestly look into our souls to ask ourselves whether we feel that we have grown and matured - if only by a fraction - both as individuals and as a people over the past year.

The soul searching starts here.

1. Unfortunately, so many of the things we do are generally left to fade into insignificance: One year ago, everyone was talking about the population census and how it could help direct what meagre resources we have to where they could be best taken advantage of. In addition to this, a number of people were at the time concerned about questions in the census forms regarding ethnicity and demographic roots. And today? Nothing! Nobody remembers the census any more.

2. One year ago, the media were being called upon to be more accurate and credible in reporting news and to endeavour to portray a fair picture of the situation in the country. One year on, we are still searching for that evasive working formula that could help define a healthy relationship between the anthorities and the press.

3. One year ago, charitable organisations and professional unions were being warned not to intervene in politics. One year on, they are still being issued with similar warnings, to no avail.

4. One year ago, the government was committed to continuing to subsidise basic food commodities. One year on, deputies in Parliament are complaining of price hikes and poverty among the people while the latter were boycotting certain products because of the high prices.

5. One year ago, it was reported that certain hospitals suffered from "lack of adequate facilities." One year on, similar reports abound.

6. One year ago, decentralisation was the magic word: In a decentralised state, and because local communities are the building blocks of society, it was proclaimed that these communities should be self-supporting and strong. One year on, local councils do not even have the power to distribute water and electricity.

7. One year ago, a Royal Jordanian marketing conference envisaged a service-oriented and market-driven future. One year on, fresh and imaginative ideas are still very much called for.

8. One year ago, the concerned authorities were being directed to speed up urban projects. One year on, the pace has slowed down as evalpations are being urged of the earthquake situation in Jordan.

9. One year ago, it was reported that the opening of the centre for cancer treatment was being delayed for six months. One year on, it remains only fair to wonder whether the centre is at all operational?

By the end of 1995, it was also becoming clear that certain new issues have risen to significance during the course of the year: Delinquency among teenagers has become an important social issue, alarm bells were being raised as fire-related incidents were reportedly on the rise, labour disputes were becoming commonplace, newspaper editors were being arrested for stepping into uncharted territories, and cultural festivals were being labelled as " scandalous." In spite of all this, we remain so far off the mark in terms of the things that we should be thinking about as we step into 1996: We should be concerned about leaking nuclear radiation, about nearby wars we cannot ignore, *about pensions, and about - among equally important* issues - care in the community for the mentally ill.

We need to do so much more! We need to start allocating funds for projects that celebrate the millennium. We need to start reaping the benefits of the technological revolution, and to start hoping that it rains. Soon!

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

MOHAMMAD A. SHUQAIR

STRANGE BELIEFS

- THE CONTINUOUS buzzing of the ear indicates that somebody is recalling another's name. The sound continues to buzz unless the name of the recaller is mentioned. If the right ear buzzes, it means that the recaller is an arch enemy and vice versa.

— THE FLUTTERING of the eyelid almost always signifies the prospect of an unpleasant news item to come.

— THE ITCHING of the hands is considered by some people as a sign of a forthcoming wealth or the arrival of a *visitor carrying good tidings.*

— IF A CHILD, who is able to walk, crawls on both hands and knees, this predicts that a guest is to arrive.

— A MAN kissing another man between the eyes means that an imminent separation is likely to take place.

— AN OVERTURNED sole in a house implies ill-luck.

— TO SHUN magic affairs, some people resort to putting on inside out underwear.

* * * * *

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

** Allow me to help you.
Ismah lee an osa'idoka.
** He said nothing, did he?
Lam yaqul shay'an, alaysa kathalek?
** Do you want anything? I'm at your service, sir.
Hal tureed ayya shay? Ana fee khidmatika, ya sayyedee.
** Has anybody asked about me?
Hal sa'ala ahadon anni?
** How can I send this telegramme? Is the post office far from here?
Kayfa astati' an orsl hathehil barqiya? Hal maktabul bareed ba'eedon an hona?
** Why are you angry? Calm down, please!
Lematha anta ghadib? Haddi' min raw'ik!
** I'll never forget you as long as I live.
Sawfa lan ansaka talama an ala qaydel hayat.
** Do you know Aziz's address?
Hal ta'ref onwan Aziz?
** I have something for you to eat.
Ahdartu laka shay'an ma le'ta'kulahu
** Smile and the world will smile with you.
Ibtasem, tabtasem laked donia.

* * * * *

JOKES

- WHAT happens when dawn breaks?
It goes into mourning.

— WHAT IS another name for a butcher's boy?
A chop assistant.

— PASSENGER (to bus conductor): Excuse me, am I all right for Regent's Park Zoo.
Bus conductor: Probably... but I'm only a bus conductor, not a zoologist.

— WHAT IS the most important thing a witch learns at school?
Spelling.

— LITTLE BOY: Was that policeman ever a baby?
MOTHER: Yes, of course.
Little Boy: Oh, Mummy, I'd love to see a baby policeman.

* * * * * *

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. Of which country or countries were these rulers?
Alexander the Great; Pyrrhus; Ivan the Terrible; Charles XII; Ramses II; Malcolm III (Bighead); Roderic O'Connor' Zog.

2. Who are the Masai?

3. Who are the longest station name in Europe?
4. How many black people are there in the United States?
5. What is pidgin English?

* * * * *

COOKING IS AN ART

BAKED TURNIPS

INGREDIENTS:

4 large turnips, peeled and cut into small wedges
2 tablespoons salad oil
1 talespoon honey
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
1 cup lightly packed fresh coriander, finely chopped
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon chili powder
salt and pepper, to taste

METHOD: Mix together salad oil, honey, lemon juice, coriander, chili powder and cumin. Blend well.

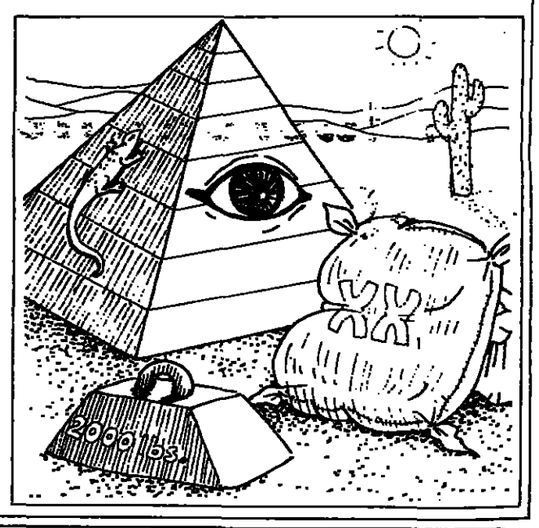
Place turnips in baking dish and pour 1/2 of coriander liquid mixture over them. Make sure all turnip pieces are well coated. Roast in 450° for about 45 minutes — until wedges are browned and soft when pierced. Baste often — until all coriander mixture is used. Season with salt and pepper. Serve warm.

* * * * *

PUZZLE ME!

THIS "rainbow man" is considered by many people to be the smartest person who ever lived. Besides discovering how rainbows are made, he figured out how much the *moon would weigh on earth. Combine the clues to get his* name.

* * * * *



JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, Jan. 4, 1996

1:00 Iris - The Happy Professor
1:15 Fireman Sam
1:25 Hurricanes
1:50 My Secret Identity
2:10 NBA
3:00 The New Leave It To Beaver
3:30 The White Heat
4:30 Gillette World Sport Special
5:00 French Programme
Sophie Et Virginie
5:30 Varietes
Le Monde Est A Vous
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Archimede
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Carol And Company
8:00 Magazine 01 (Documentary)
8:10 The Album Show
8:50 The New Avengers
10:00 News In English
10:25 Movie — "Race To Freedom"
Starring: Janet Baley & Michael Riley
12:00 Matlock (Mini-series) Ep. 1

Friday, Jan. 5, 1996

1:00 The Little Mermaids
1:30 Beethoven
1:45 Lift-Off
2:00 Wonder Why
2:25 Super Carrier
3:15 Goldrush In Alaska
4:05 Give Us a Clue
5:00 French Programme
Sophie Et Virginie
5:30 Film
Tati Danifie
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Sports Et Musique
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Short Story Cinema
8:00 Natural Wonders Of Europe
8:45 America's Funniest People
9:10 Widows (Ep. 2)
10:00 News In English
10:25 Second Chances (Drama)
11:30 Feature — "Sayonara"
Starring: Marlon Brando & Patricia Owens

Saturday, Jan. 6, 1995

2:00 Moomins
2:30 Wish Kid
3:00 Harry And The Hendersons
3:25 Blue Heelers
4:00 Voyagers
5:00 French Programme
Ordy
5:15 Children Programme
Les Badaboks
5:30 Serie
Fruit Et Legumes
6:00 Serie
Cest Mon Histoire
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Faut Pas Rever
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Major Dad
8:00 The Stamp Of Greatness
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 The Glass Virgin
10:00 News In English
10:25 Feature: "Goodnight Sweet Wife"
Starring: Margaret Colin & Ken Olin
11:50 Behaving Badly (Part 3)

Sunday, Jan. 7, 1996

2:00 The Flintstones
2:30 Droopy Master Detective
3:00 Family Plyhouse
3:30 Pugwall's Summer
4:00 Voyagers
5:00 French Programme
Ordy
5:15 Children's Programme
Les Badabocks
5:30 Serie
Fruits Et Legumes
5:50 Varieties
Jean-Michel Jarre
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Sports Et Musique
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Boogies Diner
8:00 Cinema, Cinema
8:25 The Bold & The Beautiful
9:10 Women Of The World
9:35 Heartbeat
10:00 News In English
10:25 Counterstrike
11:15 The American Chart Show
12:00 Stay Lucky

Monday, Jan. 8, 1996

2:00 Shelly Duvall's Bedtime Stories
2:30 Richie Rich
3:00 Playabout
3:15 Bustin' Loose
3:40 Animals Of The Mediterranean
4:00 Voyagers
4:30 Sky Trackers
5:00 French Programme
Ordy
5:15 Children Programme
Les Badabocks
5:30 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
5:50 Magazine
C'Est Pas Sorcier
6:20 Family Programme
L'Ecole Des Fans
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Cinq Sur Cinq
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 McHale's Navy
8:00 Invention
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 Russia — The Missing Years
"The Russian Civil War" Part I
10:00 News In English
10:25 Anna (Drama)
11:10 Taurus Rising
12:00 Ellen

Tuesday, Jan. 9, 1996

2:00 Captain Planet
2:30 Jonny Quest
2:50 Spirit Of Adventure
3:40 Scientific Eye
4:30 Voyagers
5:00 French Programme
Ordy
5:15 Children Programme
Les Badabocks
5:30 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
6:00 Medical Magazine
Savoir Plus Sante
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Ushuaia
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 You Bet Your Life
8:00 The Secret Of The Treasure Islands
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 99-1 (Police Drama) Ep. III
10:00 News In English
10:25 I'll Take Manhattan Ep. 6
11:15 Feature: "Out On The Edge"
Starring: Rick Schroeder & Mary Kay Place

Wednesday, Jan. 10, 1996

2:00 The Flintstones
2:30 Speed Racer
3:00 Bill Nye The Science Guy
3:30 Amazing Stories
4:00 Voyagers
5:00 French Programme
Sophie Et Virginie
5:30 Serie
Des Heros Ordinaires
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Sports Et Musique
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Anything For A Laugh
8:00 The Nature Of Things
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 Tycoon (Documentary)
"William Gates"
10:00 News In English
10:25 Prism
10:45 Airwolf (Drama)
11:20 The Silk Road
12:30 Second Thoughts

The new Sabrina — Julia Ormond does it her way

By Paula Span

NEW YORK — It's a mandate. Julia Ormond is ravishing, too beautiful to believe. She's starting in the remake of the cherished 1954 celluloid fairy tale "Sabrina." It is the third film in a row in which her primary function is to be intoxicating, so irresistible that at least two leading men duel bitterly for her favour.

"I don't specify to my agent, "I'm sorry, but there's only one man after me in this role; where's the other one?" she says with mock penitence. These love triangles just keep befalling her, somehow: Brad Pitt and Aidan Quinn lusted for her in "Legends of the Fall;" Sean Connery and Richard Gere did in "First Knight." Now Harrison Ford and Greg Kinnear, taking on the Humphrey Bogart and William Holden roles, are at her feet in "Sabrina."

She's still slightly stunned. Five years ago, graduating from a British drama school, she thought that by this point she might have earned a union card and joined a decent theatre company for lousy wages. She might be auditioning for a small part in her first film. Instead, director Sydney Pollack considered 40 or 50 actresses on videotape and met several dozen more in person and decide that the ascendant Ormond had the best shot at helping moviegoers temporarily forget the first Sabrina, the incomparable Audrey Hepburn. Talk about fairy tales.

Trouble is, Ormond, who's 30, doesn't consider herself either a Hepburnlike pixie or a femme fatale.

She's about to sign a deal with Miramax that will allow her to develop, produce or direct movies of her own. Check out her someone-to-be-reckoned-with style: authoritative pinstripe pantsuit, no nail polish, no jewellery except for a watch, no asking permission before she lights up a Marlboro in a small hotel room.

Check out, too, the edicts that issue along with the smoke: "It's up to women to develop their own stuff, take the responsibilities and the risks. ...Take the female away from the appendix role — the wife, the girlfriend, the one who does the sex scene," she declares. "I can no longer sit back and say, 'Oh, there are so few good parts for women' when I've been given this opportunity."

Allure seems somewhat beside the point. She'd probably prefer to spend this day bumming around Hackney, her slightly seedy London neighbourhood, in comfy clothes and a naked face. "I like wearing big sloppy jumpers and old jeans," she says. "I don't want to feel I can't step out of the house unless I have makeup on; that's a terrible state to be in, as a woman."

But reporters from at least three continents are descending on this midtown hotel for the opening to talk about the recreated "Sabrina." So Ormond has put on her mascara and is prepard to talk more about herself than she'd really like to. She's learning how to play the glamour game.

It has not come naturally. Pollack noticed her reserve —is it British? or just Ormondish? — when he flew to London to meet her in 1994. "I suspect that Julia is a little shy; she'll withhold who she really is for a while," he says. Accordingly their conversation, which was supposed to last 30 minutes or so, stretched to two hours. "I felt she was being very careful. And that carefulness didn't quite let me see what I was trying to see."

Even now, after shooting the film for six months on Long Island (in a mansion built by J.P. Morgan's grandson) and Martha's Vineyard and in New York and Paris, Pollack confesses, "I can't tell you I know her real well."

Ormond was also cautious, and sometimes prickly, with the press at first. Suddenly every slick magazine wanted to profile the fetching newcomer, who grew panicky about losing her privacy and refused to talk much about her personal life. "Looking back, I think I've been a little tense. I think I sort of froze a bit," she says now. In print, "I came across as terribly serious. I'd read articles and think, 'Oh God, I wouldn't want to spend 10 minutes with her'."

Julia Ormond

Moreover, this is an actress disinclined to swallow her opinions. Sometimes outspokeness served her well, as when she asked for, and reportedly got, script changes in the Arthurian saga "First Knight." But when she starred in the cable movie "Young Catherine" and disliked the way it was taking shape during long and arduous location work in Russia, "there were times when I lost it," Ormond acknowledges. "I blew my top. In a way, it was justified. And in a way, it's never justified."

But "Sabrina" seems to have been made with far less tension — in part a measure of the way Ormond, coolly intelligent and realising the need for some course correction, is learning the ropes. She and Pollack did spar for more than a week over whether Sabrina — the chauffeur's daughter with the perpetual crush on the tycoon's son — should have an English accent. Ormond said no: The script indicated that the family had been in the United States since Sabrina was a child. Pollack said yes: For "the music, the sound of the film I needed the exoticness, the poetry" of plummy Brit tones.

"In the past, I would have really dug in," Ormond says. This time, she relented and worked with a dialogue coach so that Sabrina sounds like an Americanised Englishwoman, which is to say less English than Ormond herself sounds. "You have to bow to someone else's experience," she reasons.

Even that minor disagreement underscores what she calls the "frustration and *limitations" of acting. She* likes to have control; only a handful of actors do (and most are men). She likes being involved in the myriad details of putting a project together; actors are usually brought aboard after the major decisions are already made. She's currently high on Hollywood's list of hot young prospects, but she recognises that "there's always insecurity in it. You can be popular one minute and out the next."

And of course, there's the Gender Thing. This is still a business in which both Pollack and Harrison Ford, in round-table interviews with reporters, offhandedly referred to the actresses being considered to play Sabrina as "girls." In fact, Ormond exhales in almost visible relief when she recalls declining Vanity Fair's invitation to be among the dozen or so young actresses on its April cover celebrating Hollywood at Oscar time. There they were, an impressive line-up — Jennifer Jason Leigh, Nicole Kidman, Uma Thurman, women for whom Ormond professes respect — nearly all of them stripped to their skivvies.

What was the magazine saying with that photograph? Ormond remembers thinking. She supplies an answer: "This is the new generation of women in film. This is what they do: They pose on magazine covers in their underwear."

Not her. In her next movie — "Smilla's Sense of Snow," adapted from the best-selling novel by Peter Hoegand directed by Bille August ("Pelle the Conqueror") — Ormond plays an unusually shrewd and fearless heroine, a Greenland-born scientist-detective who fells and disables a horde of attacking bad guys. And only one man falls in love with her. It's a far cry from being the erotic object, the beauty, the princess — The Washington Post.

Golden film oldies undercut new Hollywood stars

By Mark John
Reuter

LONDON — Forget Sylvester Stallone or Mel Gibson — if you want to bring out a blockbuster movie on the cheap, simply do up an old one.

With stars' salaries going through the roof, you can have a shiny, fully-restored classic with proven audience appeal for a fraction of the average $34 million that a major Hollywood feature costs to produce.

With technology that can restore classics such as "Gone With The Wind," "the Wizard of Oz" and "Ben Hur" to a quality better than the original, television companies are eager buyers.

That, at least, is the argument Turner Entertainment President Roger Mayer, head of one of Hollywoods largest film libraries, takes into budget meetings at parent company Turner Broadcasting System.

"I say: What do you want to do — restore 36 classic movies or make a new one that will probably flop anyway?," said Mr. Mayer, in London to promote a reissue of the 1965 epic "Doctor Zhivago."

The new print of the film starring Omar Sharif and Julie Christie includes sequences that were believed to have been lost and is a marked improvement on the copies in circulation for the past 30 years.

The cost of making a new film has doubled in the United States in the past decade, pushed up by the bargaining power of an elite of movie stars who have discovered they have a stranglehold on studios anxious to ensure box-office success.

While Sylvester Stallone counts the reported $60 million he gets for a new three-picture deal with Universal, Mayers' restores will spend at most $2 million a year on the huge MGM film library bought by Turner in 1986.

Mayer argues the logic of the pruchase — which some industry observers believe nearly destroyed Turner Broadcasting and paved the way for the present-day takeover of the company by Time Warner — is becoming more and more apparent.

"(Turner chief) Ted Turner put a price tag on the MGM library of $1.6 billion when he bought it and people at the time thought that was too high. But he had in mind ways that this library could be used," Mr. Mayer said.

While Turner does not expect any of the 3,600 features and 2,000 shorts in its library individual to make a profit second time around, film experts now believe that such collections, taken as a whole, represent priceless media assets.

"With the explosion of new cable and satellite channels around the world, there is a whole new market for these films," said Anne Fleming, deputy curator of the British Film And Television Archive, one of the world's largest film libraries.

Turner is using the MGM library as a main ingredient in its TNT Channel in the United States. Latin America and Europe and is exploiting the catalogue in its push to enter potentially lucrative Asian television markets.

It is just one of several organsiations, including Time Warner itself and several national film archive bodies in Europe, which have woken up to the latent value of cinema's historic output.

They irony of film restoration is that the greater the past success of a film, the more damage has been done to the original print by the need to make copies for distribution to cinemas.

Early films were printed on nitrate, a substance Mayer's colleage Richard May, who made the original "Doctor Zhivago" print, describes as "about as flammable as a pail of gasoline" and blames it for the death of at least one *MGM staff member.*

Mr. May and his restorers start by bringing together the original print of film with any duplicates in circulation so as to have the strongest base from which to begin the restoration.

This part of the process alone can bear fruit — in the case of "Dr. Zhivago" the hunt for existing prints turned up sequences from a scene long believed to have been lost.

Using the so-called "Wet-Gate" process, they then immerse the film in a liquid to fill in any gaps or cracks that have appeared. The result is a quality that matches a new release.

Mr. May said there was around five years of work left on the core Turner film library and he was now trying to develop links with film archivists outside the United States for cooperation on future restoration projects.

"We want to combine with other restorers in a worldwide effort — Britain is particularly strong as are parts of Europe... sometimes they have things *that turn out to be invaluable," he said.*

With bravado, Saul Zaentz invests in literature

By Kate Dunn
New York Times Service

PIENZA, Italy — In an olive grove beside an abandoned monastery, the filmmakers are working their way towards the 23d take of a key scene in "The English Patient."

Juliette Binoche, as Hana, a Canadian nurse from an Allied medical unit, and Naveen Andrews as Kip, the Sikh bomb-disposal expert and Hana's lover, reach for a complex, delicate moment when they simultaneously defuse a bomb and have their first embrace.

This $30 million movie, which will complete filming next month in Tunisia and will be released next year, also stars Ralph Fiennes ("Strange Days" and "Quiz Show") as the enigmatic English patient of the title; Willem Dafoe as an Italian-Canadian thief turned spy and Kristin Scott-Thomas as Katharine, the patient's lover before his plane crash.

The film is a risk for its producer, Saul Zaentz, a man whose pictures — including "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," "Amadeus" and "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" — have won 13 Oscars.

Zaentz, who is 73, is perhaps the last of the great independent producers. Other moviemakers admire his choice of subject and his bravado in using his own money to make movies.

But his last outing, "At Play in the Fields of the Lord," in 1991, lost $20 million. This time around he has $5 million of his and his partners' money (Miramax put up the rest) invested in finding out whether a literary masterpiece like Michael Ondaatje's "English Patient," which won England's Booker Prize in 1992, can turn a profit.

Right now, the scene on the hillside is not working. As the shadows cast by the Tuscan cedars grow longer, the director, Anthony Minghella, calls for another break. Behind him sits Zaentz, who has been credited with catching talent on the cusp of greatness, when he can still afford it. Binoche, who starred in Krzysztof Kieslowski's "Blue," proved to be one such catch in "The Unbearable Lightness of Being." Zaentz believes that Minghella is another.

The producer has the patience to wait through take after take for the scene to sort itself out. Rather than screaming at his director about schedules and budget when the action stops, he tells a little story.

"We were flying in a small plane in Brazil, looking for locations for 'At Ply'," he said. "It was 5:30 a.m. Hector Babenco, the film's director, and everybody in back of the plane were sleeping. Then I looked up and saw in front that the pilot was asleep, too. After about 10 minutes, the pilot woke up by himself. He looked at me from the corner of his eye, worried. I didn't let on. He busied himself with the controls. We kept on course.

"Later, when I told the story, Hector said, 'Why didn't you do something?' I said: 'We were fine. But if it had looked like we were going to crash, I would have put my hands around his throat'."

That story describes the way Zaentz works: certain he has hired the right talent, he gives them latitude. As if to illustrate the point, an exasperated Minghella jogs up the hills to talk to his producer. "It is going any better?"

The white-bearded Zaentz just nods and nods. Reassured, Minghella walks down the hill, pauses to take Binoche's hand and speaks quietly to her. He does the same to Andrews. A few more takes, and it's a wrap.

In an age in which successful movies are likely to be based on comic books, "The English Patient" represents the other extreme. Zaentz has money riding not only on a relatively untested director but on a period film, an anti-war story about love and betrayal of individuals, ideals, nations and races. In "The English Patient," the ideas alone could make it a difficult film to pull off.

"'The English Patient' is a very hard sell," said Minghella, who brought the book to Zaentz's attention after the producer called him in London to say how much he had liked "Truly, Madly, Deeply," a romantic ghost story written and directed by Minghella. "The English Patient is too uncompromising for the amount of money it is taking to make. That's why Saul is one of only two or three producers in the world who could rustle up the money for it."

Producer Saul Zaents (right) with actor Willem Dafoe on location in Italy

It's been an unlikely life for an ex-sailor from New Jersey who, at the end of World War II, intended to become a chicken farmer. Instead, Zaentz fell into the recording business in California. (He now lives in Berkeley). In the 1960s his Fantasy Records label, known for jazz and the Creedence Clearwater Revival, made him a fortune.

Bored, he announced to his partners that he wanted to make films out of two '60s novels, "At Play in the Fields of the Lord," by Peter Matthiessen, and "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," by Ken Kesey. Shortly thereafter he sent a copy of the Kesey novel to the Czech expatriate director Milos Forman.

"No major studio wanted to finance 'Cuckoo's Nest,'" Forman said by telephone from Los Angeles. "So he had to do it himself, and the film had to be cheap.

I was a director whose work he respected, but I was still cheap because my first film, 'Taking Off,' in 1971 had been a flop."

A decade later, Forman told Zaentz that he should make a film of the play "Amadeus;" their second Oscar-winning collaboration was born.

"Saul is the producer ideal because he realised that a film has to be made by one person, the director, not by committee," Forman said.

Minghella is a more recent convert. "Everything about Saul is beguiling if you're a filmmaker," he said, "because he has such courage and such confidence in the people he elects to work with."

Binoche saw a more grandfatherly side and appreciated the fact that he had the courtesty to leave the set during her nude scenes. "Saul is not there to control things but to give of himself," she said. "I need warmth and understanding, and Saul is there for that."

Zaentz said he was committed to "doing honour" to modern literature through art films that attract picky artists like Binoche, Fiennes, Dafoe and the cinematographer John Seale, all working for less than what they would usually earn.

In the face of great art, he said, egos must be put aside: "As Ingmar Bergman said, actors have to get to the point where there's no you and there's no me. Not only the actors but everybody should think that way."

Novelists, too, trust Zaentz with their books. Minghella wrote the screen adaptation of "The English Patient" with substantial help from Ondaatje, a Canadian of Sri Lankan origin.

"It's been a wonderful collaboration," said Ondaatje of working with both Minghella and Zaentz.

"I thought it would be, given the quality of Saul's other films made from books I love, including 'At Play.'"

These days Zaentz is scanning the bookshelves for his next project. The only requirement, he said, is that he and his director "must be equally passionate about the book we want to make into a film."

Fiennes summed him up this way: "Saul is extremely unusual in that he's hung onto a generosity of spirit in a murderous business."

Herbal medicine

A powerful and growing force in modern medicine

By Brenda C. Coleman
AP Medical Writer

In the jungles of South America, a 17th-century Jesuit missionary discovered that Indians were using a tree bark to cure fevers such as malaria. His discovery gave the world quinine.

Since then, herbal medicine has come a long way.

It is still practised in its basic form in both primate and modern societies, and it gave rise to high-tech research and manufacturing that no primitive healer would recognise.

For example, tonnes of leaves from a Madagascar periwinkle plant are harvested yearly to make precious ounces of a powerful drug against childhood leukaemia. And scientists are searching the world's disappearing rain forests for cures for cancer and AIDS.

Yet at its most basic level, healing with plants is still one of the least understood and most mistrusted of arts.

The United States is "like a developing country" when it comes to herbal remedies, says professor Norman R. Farnsworth, a globe-trotting expert in natural medicines at the University of Illinois in Chicago.

Government rules and the lack of a long tradition of practice have kept the herbal therapy out of the mainstream, Prof. Farnsworth says.

'We don't have a history of it like in England or in Germany. We have Indian medicine men, and nobody thinks much of them," says Prof. Farnsworth, director of collaborative research in pharmaceutical sciences.

Four-fifths of all people still rely chiefly on traditional medicines, largely plants and their components, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates.

Many developed countries have integrated herbal remedies into their health care, says Roy Upton, president of the American Herbalists Guild.

Such countries include Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, China, India, Japan and African nations, he says.

'In many of those countries, not only are herbal medicines widely utilised, but they're also reimbursed under the national insurance plans," says Mr. Upton, quality manager for an herbal products company in Scotts Valley, California.

But mainstream U.S. medicines is so uninformed that it has been a source of flagrant misinformation in the field, says Prof. Farnsworth, who also has served as a consultant to WHO and to the National Institutes of Health.

One University of Michigan-trained physician who uses herbal remedies in her practice estimates fewer than 5,000 of almost 700,000 U.S. doctors accept such treatments as legitimate and use them.

"All we learned about (in medical school) was drugs," said Dr. Joan Priestley, who incorporated holistic remedies into her practice after seeing patients improve while taking them.

American consumers, however, are embracing herbal remedies.

The U.S. market for them has more than doubled since 1985, to $1.13 billion in 1993, excluding teas and homeopathic remedies, according to the London firm McAlpine, Thorpe and Warrier, Ltd.., which has the latest figures.

Growth is expected to continue at 10 per cent to 15 per cent annually through 1997, the firm says.

"It's an industry I would compare to the computer industry,: says Peggy Brevoort, a past president of the American Herbal Products Association, based in Austin, Texas. "It's exploded in the last few years."

The World Health Organisation, recognising a global increase in the use of herbal medicines, in 1992 issued guidelines for countries in regulating their manufacture, safety and sales.

It also promoted their benefits.

"I cannot overemphasise the importance of countries.... endorsing the value of medicinal plants in therapy and self-medication," said Dr. Olayiwola Akerele, then-manager of WHO's traditional medicine programme, at a 1992 conference in Italy.

Herbal medicines are different from high-tech pharmaceuticals using plant compounds, WHO noted

Hight-tech medicines use highly isolated chemicals alone or with other active chemicals. Herbal medicines are actual parts of plants, or their juice, oils or gums. They may be used in extracts, tinctures, teas, capsules or tablets with inert fillers.

About 400 herbs are in general commerce in the United States, including 75 to 100 exclusively in herbal remedies, estimates Robert S. McCaleb, president of the Herb Research Foundation in Boulder Colorado.

His non-profit educational group receives about 20,000 calls a year from prople seeking information, he said.

Medicinal herbs with clear benefits include gingko for treating aging-related conditions, saw palmetto for reducing symptoms of benign prostate enlargement, echinacea for strengthening immunity and garlic for protecting against heart disease. Mr. McCaleb said.

Gingko, for example, is used to increase blood flow to the brain and relieve short-term memory loss, ringing in the ears and dizziness.

Doctors in this country hardly know about gingko - made from the leaves of an ancient Chinese ornamental tree - but more than 100,000 physicians worldwide wrote more than 10 million prescriptions for it in 1989, researchers reported the following year.

As a prescription medicine, it is covered by national health insurance in countries such as Germany, says professor Varro E Tyler, a plant-medicine expert at Purdue University.

More than 200 studies have been done worldwide on the effects of gingko on human beings, Prof. Farnsworth said.

Rather than invest in added research on such remedies, U.S companies put their money, time and effort into looking for new chemical plant compounds they can modify and synthesise, he said.

A single find can change the world.

About three-quarters of more than 120 drugs that are still extracted from plants for prescription pharmaceuticals worldwide were discovered following up native folklore claims, Prof. Farnsworth has calculated.

All of them came from about 90 species of plants, he says.

"If all the drugs we get from plants that people feel are useful came from only 90 species of plants...common sense tells you there have to be hundreds more waiting," he says.

Thalidomide, once blackballed, may make comeback as AIDS treatment

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Use of the drug thalidomide may make a comeback in treating AIDS after years of disuse following the discovery in the 1960s that it caused disfiguring birth defects.

The drug has done well in preliminary tests for federal approval to treat a wide range of AIDS-related illnesses and may even slow the growth of the HIV virus.

"The results are so striking that we may put a request for marketing approval before the end of the test," Peter Andrulis, president of Andrulis Pharmaceutical Corp. in Maryland, told AFP.

Thalidomide was developed and approved in Germany in the late 1950s and sold in 21 countries as a medication to reduce the nausea common in the early stages of pregnancy, known as morning sickness.

Some 10,000 children were born severely deformed — without legs or with hands directly attached to their shoulders — because their mothers used thalidomide during pregnancy.

Many of those children died young as a result of their deformities, but those who survived are now in their 40s.

The U.S. Food And Drug Administration (FDA) never approved the drug for use or sale in the United States on grounds it had not been sufficiently tested and proven safe for use by humans.

The few Americans born with thalidomide deformities were the children of U.S. military personnel stationed in Germany, where the drug was readily available.

Andrulis, a private pharmaceutical company, is currently testing thalidomide in the treatment of Alzheimer's, in addition to AIDS and other ailments.

The AIDS trials began in 1994 and may be completed by the end of the year. Some 170 people are expected to be involved in the tests by the time they are concluded.

In 1989, a team of researchers at Rockefeller University in New York found that the drug played a role in the production of a protein by white blood cells exposed to infection.

That protein limits the spread of infections such as tuberculosis, and in test-tube experiments has limited the growth of the HIV virus that causes AIDS.

It can also minimise secondary illnesses that often accompany AIDS such as fevers and weight loss.

New cancer drug gives hope to millions

By Paul Harris
Reuter

London — A new cancer drug from a British firm has given hope to millions of sufferers, but experts have warned that optimism should be tempered with caution.

British Biotech Plc's Marimastat drug is the first of a new kind of drug that aims not to kill cancer tumours, but stop them from spreading.

The firm reported that initial findings from phase II clinical trials of the drug had been positive.

The group's share price has soared as a result, at one stage doubling to 2,100 pence ($32), but British Biotech warns that the drug is still a long way from being prescribed.

"It is all very encouraging, but we must stress there is a long way to go yet. We must be careful not to raise people's hopes," a spokeswoman for the firm said.

Despite the caution, Marimastat does offer the prospect of a breakthrough in the fight against cancer, one of medicine's most implacable enemies and which affects an estimated seven million people worldwide at any one time.

Tests showed 43 per cent of patients in trials met criteria for potential benefit and have continued with the treatment.

Gordon McVie, research director for the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, said the news was encouraging, but warned against raising false hopes.

"We are very cautious about this at the moment," he said.

Cancer is the largest single area of research spending in the drugs industry, and most cancer treatments involve actively attacking the tumour.

Chemotherapy bombards the body with radiation that kills rapidly-growing cells. While this destroys tumours, it kills hair follicles and cells in the lining of the patient's gut.

Hundreds of cancer-killing drugs are also in use, but tumours develop resistance and after a brief period of success, most drugs decline in effectiveness as treatment continues.

Marimastat seeks to prevent the growth and spread of a tumour — the factor that causes most deaths. It works by inhibiting enzymes, called metalloproteinases, that enable the tumour to spread. "It acts as a road block to the cancer moving through the blood stream," the spokeswoman said.

As the drug does not seek to kill the tumour the development of resistance is thought to be much less likely. There is also unproven evidence that the drug stops a tumour tapping into the patient's blood system to get the nutrients it needs to grow.

Nearly all solid tumours grow in the same way, so Marimastat could treat a potentially broad range of cancers. The tests showed positive indications for colorectal, ovarian, pancreatic and prostatic cancer, and more studies will follow.

"It looks very promising and the initial trial findings do bare out the ideas. But we are only a tenth of the way through," said Peter Laing, pharmaceuticals analyst at Salomon Brothers.

One other area that British Biotech says it will explore is using the drug in combination with cancer-killing treatments. Anecdotal evidence from tests suggests this may be possible and it would follow similar combinatorial trends in treating AIDS.

Analysts believe the drug, if it successfully passes further phase II and III trials, could be on the market by 1999.

New contraceptive devices stalled, report says

New York (R) — Lawsuits, the lengthy government approval process and the fears of both consumers and pharmaceutical companies are stalling efforts to create a new generation of contraceptive devices, the New York Times reported last week.

The paper quoted a new study, public health officials and other family planning experts as saying that it will be many years before new methods of contraception become available in the United States. New contraceptives are now more likely to be refinements of existing products.

The study, published by the non-profit Alan Guttmacher Institute, said that many companies have left the field, scared off by the possibility of product liability lawsuits and expensive, lengthy regulatory scrutiny. The report is published in the latest issue of Family Planning Perspectives, a publication of the institute. The institute does research on reproductive issues.

The report said the debate on abortion and concerns about the side effects of contraceptives have contributed to the pharmaceutical industry's reluctance to enter the family planning field.

"There's clearly a need for better contraceptive methods, when well over half the pregnancies to U.S. women are unplanned," Susan Tew, a spokeswoman for the New York-based Guttmacher Institute, told the newspaper. "And we clearly need more methods that offer dual protection, from pregnancies and from sexually transmitted disease. But it doesn't look like we'll see much on the market any time soon."

The report in family planning perspectives said only four large private companies worldwide are known to be researching new contraceptive methods. They were Ortho, a subsidiary of Johnson Johnson Wyerth-Averst Laboratories, a subsidiary of American Home Products Schering AG and Organon, which is owned by Akzo Nobel.

Only three new contraceptive methods have received approval by the Food and Drug Administration since 1990. The hormonal implant Norplant was engulfed in lawsuits, the female condom did not attract a large market, and the third, depo-provera, an injecteble hormone, took more than 20 years to be approved by the FDA.

Study links drug to higher Parkinson's death rate

LONDON (R) — Parkinson's disease sufferers treated with a combination of two drugs, selegiline and levodopa, showed a higher mortality rate in a study than those treated with levodopa alone, British researchers have said.

The researchers working for the Parkinson's Disease Society studied 520 patients and found that 76 out of 271 taking both drugs died over a 10-year period compared with 44 patients out of 249 taking levodopa alone.

The study, reported in the British Medical Journal, was the first to find a higher mortality rate linked to selegiline, also known as deprenyl and eldepryl.

"There have been a number of studies researching the effects of the drug and this is the only one that has shown any increase in mortality rates for people taking selegiline with levodopa.

"More research is needed before firm conclusions can be made," the society said.

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurological disorder resulting when certain cells in the brain stop functioning properly. The cells produce dopamine, a chemical messenger the body needs to coordinate properly.

Levodopa works as a replacement for dopamine because it converts into the chemical messenger once it reaches the brain. Selegiline inhibits the breakdown of dopamine and was also thought to slow down the progression of Parkinson's disease.

"This study, in addition to raising concerns about mortality rates, has cast doubts about the potential clinical benefits of the drug and the claims that it can slow down the progression of the disease," said the Parkinson's Disease Society in a statement.

But the society said sufferers should not stop taking selegiline before consulting their doctors.

The researchers had not yet found the precise reason for the increased death rates found in the study among patients taking selegiline, it said.

WEEKEND CROSSWORD

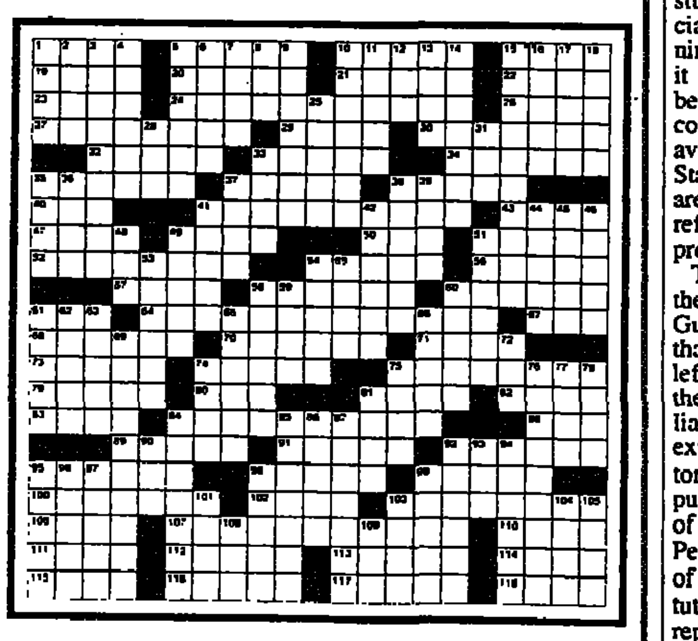
UTTER MADNESS
By Chuck Deodene

ACROSS

1 First name in [illegible]
5 Mast pole
10 Sir's counterpart
15 Yearn for
19 Buckinghamshire school
20 Sphere of action
21 Useful, old style
22 Atlanta Hawks' home
23 Actor Bogosian
24 TV commentator, jokingly
26 Arrow poison
27 Protection
29 Trademark
30 Loching horde
32 Siskel's partner
33 Big-eyed primate
34 Elizabeth of "Evening Shade"
35 Volcanic rock
37 Equine
38 Frame
40 "— wing and a prayer"
41 Insincere words of support
43 — dust
47 Revise texts
49 Russo or Aubenonois
50 Relative of 3d
51 Accomplishments
52 Open-minded
54 Grim [illegible]
56 Renown
57 Moore of movies
58 Curly [illegible]
60 Magician's cry
61 VIP in sea warfare: abbr
64 Exasperating [illegible]
67 Slangy assent
68 Oriental warriors
70 Temper glass
71 Pitcher Hershiser
73 Perfumery oil
74 British royal family of yore
75 Demonstrations
79 Audience
80 Muslim official
81 Ball or bag beginning
82 Samoan city
83 "Keystone —"
84 First Amendment guarantee
88 London's place: abbr
89 Hodgepodges
91 Whimpers
92 Invariably
95 Mom [illegible]
98 Goddess of agriculture
99 Glossy
100 Made a comeback
102 Author Waugh
103 Certain plots of ground
106 Run long
107 Game played with a pocketknife
110 Money for release
111 "Stop — you've heard this one"
112 Like an old woman
113 Lasso
114 Slave of yore
115 English queen
116 Emphatic turndown
117 Early fur merchant
119 Colored

DOWN

1 Drags
2 Ranson d' —
3 Phone message system
4 Nightmares
5 Secret
6 Edwin J — (Can poet)
7 Courtroom
8 Invisible [illegible]
9 They'll give you lifts
10 Mass [illegible]
11 Comrade of Porthos and Aramis
12 Cube
13 Winged
14 Tinfored
15 Trombonist's need
16 Motivate
17 Entrap
18 Actress Spacek
25 Scandinavian
28 — room idem
31 Columbus monogram
33 Amble
35 Creator of quarrams
36 Disassemble
37 Inking
38 Burns slightly
39 "— home"
41 Soviet bigwig
42 "Aeneid" author
44 Condition marked by tremors
45 Condition
46 Bar legally
48 Tumor of [illegible]
49 — [illegible]
51 Search persistently
53 Impede
54 Sycophant
55 Hawkeye's home
56 Ice cream feast
59 "A — clock scholar"
62 Evita
61 Quick bite
62 TNT part
63 Leading
65 Indicators
66 Synagogue scroll
69 Emergency extrication device
72 Meadow
73 Pie ingredient
75 Chest muscles, briefly
76 Kin of a blind tiger
77 Lilliputian
78 Droops
81 Sleep denizens
84 Rebel pitcher
85 Elementary textbook
86 Blender setting
87 Sister of Orestes
90 Luau souvenir
92 Acetic acid, in England
93 Piloted
94 Like an otter's feet
95 Stage offering
96 Ingested
97 Tuckered out
98 Television feature
99 Take care of
101 Beach sight
103 Till
104 Have a repast
105 Luge
108 1004
109 Assenting word



Diagramless, 19 x 19
By Frances Burton

ACROSS

1 Zhivago's beloved
5 Fratricide victim
6 Move stealthily
11 Formal dance
12 Greeting word
13 Aquarium fish
16 Coves
18 Face feature
20 Unwritten score
22 Adams or McClurg
23 Lubricates
25 Plant fuel
26 Beaver construction
29 Museum official
31 Whittle
32 Impudent
35 Washes
36 In abundance
39 Surgical beam
37 [illegible] off
40 — Stevenson (loser to DDE)
41 Get rid of
43 Single or [illegible]
44 Abode, var
45 Insect
46 Marquis de —
49 Hitch
50 Golf club
51 First person
53 "Divine Comedy" author
55 Prima ballerina
57 Conquers
61 New York harbor island
62 "The Ghost and Mrs —"
64 Circus performers
65 Tale
66 Compulsion

DOWN

1 Testing place for short
2 Blind as —
3 Rent again
4 Redford-Hoffman movie
6 Greek letter
7 "— and Sunny"
8 Building wing
9 General Robert —
10 Dried flower mixture
14 Took a bus
15 Majesty
17 Evening party
19 Keep after taxes
21 Certain European
24 Commemorative tablet
26 Goliath's foe
27 God of war
28 Noble material
29 Certain European
30 Kind of exam
31 [illegible] group
32 — [illegible] (uncomfortable)
33 Jules Verne character
34 Chips
35 Engages in legal proceedings
36 Explorer Vasco da —
37 Arabian port
39 False front
42 Columbus' ship
46 Comedian Caesar
47 Desert nomad
48 Closed
52 Burrowing mammal
54 Musical work
56 Labor org
57 "— Abner"
58 Curved letter
60 Faction
63 Pole

CRYPTOGRAMS

1\. JPHBSMW ASMKT SCKPE SQ KPC BPDSKHIP WYHKI ISKHYPW QRQYA LPKYW YS LHKIRIHYP EMKKRKT QSR JSKRKT LSDDRWWRSKPE. — By Earl Ireland

2\. DINWYI LPI FAULTY DIZTOI ZWOOWR, GI MUSIK LW CIYIRTKI FUTMNYUIRKC GULP WAY ASAMIMIC. — By Ed Huddleson

3\. PFFM YAFPIR JF DINNK INFORM: WE IAA SAYS EIWAY. JNK NSIMWRP WRYJNODJWFRY. — By Frank N. Stein

4\. EPCAOI SXF E LYPI BET UX BAG AG ZEL CIVEL: NYT VEHNZAGV OXHKECT LUXOR, EGP RIIK XYU XS OELAGXL. — By Duane H. McGogy

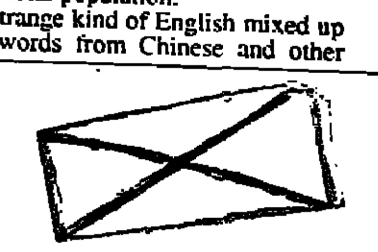
ANSWERS

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1\. Macedonia; Epirus; Russia; Sweden; Egypt; Scotland; Ireland; Albania.
2\. They are an East African race, distinguished by their splendid physique and their great bravery, who live on the border lands of Kenya and Tanzania. Their diet consists of meat which they wash down with a mixture of milk and cattle food.
3\. LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGOGERYCHWYRNDROBWLLLLANTISILIOGOGOGOCH! It's in Anglesey in North Wales.
4\. About 25,000,000, or about a ninth of the total population.
5\. A strange kind of English mixed up with words from Chinese and other Eastern languages. It has little sense of grammar or style and it is difficult to understand. One good place to hear it spoken is Hong Kong.

PUZZLE ME

* IEYE + SACK + NEWT + TON = ISAAC NEWTON



Mystery and monumentality at Amman Citadel's Roman temple

The Great Temple of Amman: the Architecture

By Chrysanthos Kanellopoulos
American Centre of Oriental Research (ACOR)
Amman, 1994, 123 pp, illustrated (b&w and colour, plus 13 fold-out plates)
JD 42 ($60 outside Jordan)

Reviewed by Rami G. Khouri

This is the second book in the American Centre of Oriental Research (ACOR) Research Publications Series edited by Dr Patricia Maynor Bikai, following the Mosaics of Jordan book published in 1993. While this is a more technical volume that is aimed primarily at archaeologists, architects, art historians and other scholars (who can navigate faster than most of us through sentences like "A small peculiarity in our case could be the square section of the sockets, which does not recall a cylindrical axle but rather requires a pivot with a quadrangular end"), the lay person interested in archaeology and history should not be scared off by the technical language and mathematical wizardry of this fine publication.

In many ways, this highly detailed book captures the most basic thrill and mystery of archaeology for the non-specialist reader: it starts with the visible remains of a very old building, excavates to find material remains from the past, and interprets the evidence in a manner that touches on many aspects of people's lives two thousand years ago, including their languages and scripts, religious beliefs, art, technology and architecture. Readers interested in archaeology and history are well advised to take the time to consider this book as a possible gift for a more technically-oriented friend, a family interested in the Jordanian past, or a school or university library. Like the Great Temple itself, this book achieves a level of excellence because it satisfies the needs of both the specialist and the general reader.

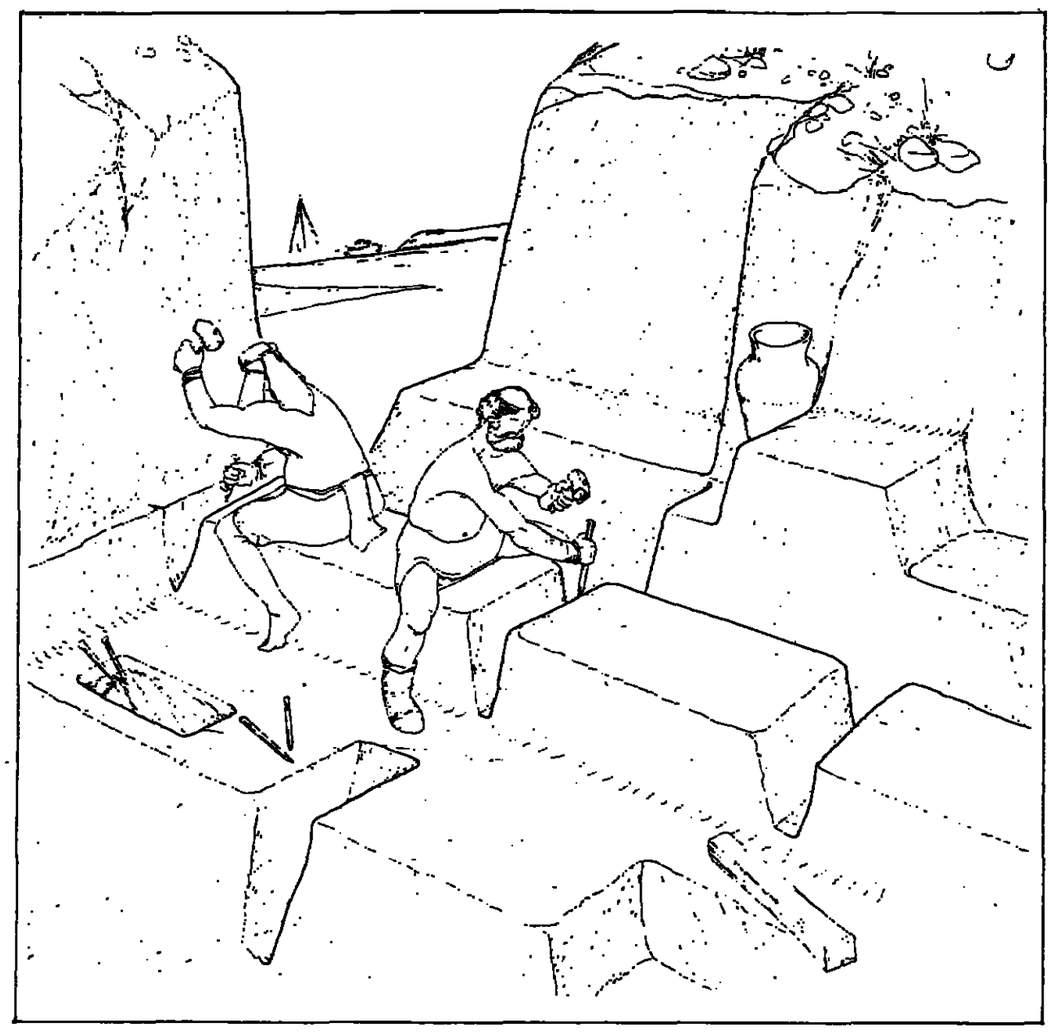
The Great Temple in question stands atop Citadel Hill in central Amman, and has always been popularly referred to as the Temple of Hercules.

The most fascinating section in this book for me was the archaeo-detective work by the author and his colleagues to try to determine if this temple was, indeed, dedicated to Hercules. Mr Kannelopoulos' conclusion, based on a variety of available evidence (monumental and more ordinary inscriptions, graffiti, coins, and finger and elbow fragments of a giant statue), is that "no secure attribution of that temple to Herakles [Hercules] can be made" today.

If several key missing pieces of the dedicatory inscription that stood above the entrance of the temple are ever found, they would certainly resolve the issue. The segments of the dedicatory inscription that are known today have been transcribed as follows: "For the safety of Emperors Lord Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Verus together with whom...(he) dedicated the sanctuary to god...and erected the temple?... In the term of Geminius Marcianus legate of the righteous emperors. Year..."

The inscription confirms the construction date of the temple as 161-166 AD, just after a burst of urban development in Roman Philadelphia, as Amman was then known. This was a period of brisk economic expansion in the land of Jordan, in the half century after the Roman Emperor Trajan annexed the Nabataean Kingdom to the south (106 AD) and incorporated all of Jordan into the Roman Province of Arabia. Security and renewed trade flows spurred significant economic growth, which, combined with imperial patronage and funding, in turn prompted a burst of urban splendour. The temple was the most conspicuous single monument in downtown Roman Philadelphia, due to its deliberate siting on the summit of a hill and thus visible from the city-centre in the valley below (near the existing theatres).

One of the great pleasures of this book is its information, photos and plans that help us understand the city's layout in Roman times. A full-page aerial photograph of the citadel and a detailed plan of the citadel and the city-centre are especially valuable in showing the many different ancient structures in this area. I predict that



Hypothetical reconstruction of an ancient quarry (courtesy C. Kannelopoulos)

we will soon be seeing many visitors to the Citadel carrying photocopies of these plans and photos in their hands, as they discover the various monuments from the Iron, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic eras.

The book also clarifies the physical and visual (ie. political!) relationships between the temple and the city-centre. It reviews the evidence for the propylaeon (monumental entrance precinct), winding staircase and gate that connected the city-centre with the temple, and includes some very valuable late 19th century photographs showing remains of the propylaeon that have since disappeared.

The Great Temple is thought to have been one of two Roman temples on the Citadel; the other one was located within the northern extension of the Citadel which is now dominated by the remains of the early Islamic complex.

It is possible that the marble fist/fingers and elbow remains of a 13-metre-high statue come from the statue of the god/goddess that once stood in the south side of the portico of the Great Temple's temenos (the enclosed holy precinct surrounding the temple) – from where it would have been very visible to the people in the city. Precisely which deity was portrayed here remains to be resolved; a leading candidate, the author says, is Astarte. The assymetrical position of the temple within its temenos, leaving slightly more room on the south side portico, may have been designed to accommodate the statue. The statue fingers have recently been placed at the top of the staircase leading up to the archaeological museum on the citadel, where they can be viewed by the public.

The author notes that the city leaders of Philadelphia probably wanted to compete with other Roman cities in the area for the most beautiful or majestic city, and one way of doing this was through the placement and design of their principal temple. The temple itself is not particularly big as Roman temples go; with its podium it measures some 43 x 26 metres. But its design gave it "an illusion of monumentality", thanks mainly to delineation of the temenos with a simple, low colonnade, which gave the temple itself a rather dramatic, soaring look. The column shafts of the temenos measured five metres high while those of the temple were nearly eleven metres high, which provided the necessary visual contrast for the desired monumentality.

Wide spaces between the columns gave the facade of the temple "almost classically elegant proportions", in contrast with the very vertical appearance of the Temple of Artemis at Jerash, the author notes. He says that the execution and decoration of the building itself, however, were less impressive, and certainly fall behind other temples in the area, such as at Jerash and Baalbek (Lebanon).

The poor craftsmanship may be due to fiscal hard times in the mid-2nd-century, when local donors had to request money from the emperor to finance the project. There are indications also that the temple was never finished (as was the case at the Temple of Artemis in Jerash); perhaps this was due to political and economic pressures resulting from the conflict with the Parthians in Persia, or to the consequences of the plague of 165-166 AD. Strapped for cash, the builders of the Great Temple decided to focus their energy and money on the facade, the author says.

The excavations have confirmed that the inscription across the facade could only have been inscribed on five architraves (horizontal stone blocs resting on the facade's columns and capitals). This in turn resolves the long-standing argument about how many columns adorned the facade. The answer is six columns, making this a hexastyle temple. The upper part of the temple collapsed in a major earthquake, either in 363 AD or 520 AD. Some of the capitals from the temenos were reused in the Byzantine church on the Citadel, and the rest of the temple collapsed in the great earthquake of 749 AD.

The book starts with a brief introduction reviewing previous scholarly work on the temple, and then systematically describes the results of the work that was been done under the aegis of this project in 1991-1993. Individual chapters supported by numerous drawings, photos and plans deal with the South Propylaeon, the Southeast Temenos Gate, the Temenos, and the Temple. The Temple itself receives the most extensive treatment, with detailed descriptions of elements such as the podium, foundation and stylobate; the column bases, shafts and capitals; the architraves and the inscription; the frieze, cornices, and pediment; the deity and the historical context, and several other subjects. The book also has sections and appendices on various technological aspects of the work, anastylosis, the colossal statue fragments, earthquake study, achieving firm joints, and limestone weathering rates.

The very high quality technical drawings and figures and plans make this book useful for the lay person as well as the scholar, and some of the drawings show how ancient stone quarries operated and how the massive stones were moved and worked in Roman times. One stone that was cut for use as a column drum weighed 27 tons – thought to be the largest stone moved from a quarry in Jordan since antiquity. The restoration work that has been done at the temple includes re-erecting three columns and an architrave with some letters from the dedicatory inscription; this is hoped to be only the beginning of a longer term project to turn the Citadel into an archaeological park. The restoration has been funded largely by a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The very high quality of the scholarship and editing of this book is matched by its printing, which was done in Amman under the technical supervision of an expert from USAID, which provided the substantial funding for publication as well as the excavation and restoration efforts. The field work was carried out by a joint team from ACOR and the Department of Antiquities, under the direction of Mr Kanellopoulos.

This book, like its predecessor mosaics volume in the ACOR series, is not only about history – it also makes history in its own way. It reconfirms that high quality scholarly publications can be routinely produced in Jordan, if sufficient will and funds are available. With ACOR and local printers in Amman having shown the way in this respect, it remains to be seen if quality archaeological publications can be produced on a regular basis without substantial international funding. There is no reason why this should not happen. The most recent volume of the Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan series published by the Department of Antiquities is of very high quality; it may reflect the initial signs of how international technical expertise supported by external funding can gradually impact positively on indigenous efforts in the same field. This is also the first volume produced by ACOR's Archaeological Publications Endowment, which is underwritten by sales of the Mosaics of Jordan book.

This book is a significant contribution to the scholarly literature on ancient Amman, and also a noteworthy example of the satisfying results that can be achieved by international collaboration among experts from several different countries. It should also be praised for being printed so soon after the end of the fieldwork, so that the fruits of the scholars' research can be shared with the rest of the worldwide community of people who are fascinated by the enduring mysteries and relentless pleasures of walking through the standing remains of one of the world's great – and still not fully explored – ancient citadels.

This book is available from ACOR (tel. 846117) and selected bookstores in Amman.

Deputies criticise draft budget

(Continued from page 1)

promises that are not realised? Why doesn't the government discuss the Jordanian monetary policy every now and then with us?"

But Mr. Zoubi, however, said he agreed with the Finance Committee to lift the subsidy on bread.

Leftist Deputy Toujan Faisal directed her criticism at what she saw as the government's manipulation of facts and figures. She bemoaned the lack of access to information as a basic right to every deputy and citizen and accused the government of hiding facts and mishandling information.

"When the government conducted its (1994) census, why were the questions only concentrated on the citizens' place of residence and origin?" she asked. "Why did not it include two more questions on income and work?"

Centrist Deputy Abdul Karim Dughmi called on the government to amend the Supply Law to increase the authorities of the minister of supply in defining prices of more commodities.

Many deputies pointed out however that the discussions were not worthwhile and complained that the government would not listen to their demands. But they said they were going to say them anyway.

"We have been used to these kinds of sessions when discussing the budget and presenting the demands of our constituencies although we know for sure that what has been decided is difficult to change," said centrist deputy Fawzi Tueimeh. "We have asked the government in the past several years to consult with us over the general financial allocations to regions and governorates, but this demand was not met with attention."

IAF Deputy Mohammad Oweideh used the session to criticise the new administrative divisions and said they ignored geographic and population distribution.

"The divisions were conducted in a way to serve (the government's plans) for the next parliamentary elections," Dr. Oweidah claimed.

But Dr. Majali defended the administrative divisions that went into effect as of the beginning of this year. "While we heard many complaints about the recent administrative divisions, they are meant to improve the government's performance and enable officials to provide the best services. They also reflect the general trend towards decentralisation," he said.

Most of the deputies concentrated their demands on the need to build more hospitals, libraries and mosques. Islamist deputies focused more on the need to pay more attention to the maintenance and establishment of mosques but also included in their speeches criticism of "Zionist plans" and American and European hegemony on the region.

All deputies, however, lauded His Majesty King Hussein's policies and directives and called on the government to abide by them.

Centrist deputy Mohammad Huneiti said that while the King called for administrative reform and modernisation his directives were never implemented.

"Actually (the situation) is getting worse," he said. "And this is the basic reason for corruption."

Independent deputies, such as Ali Shatti, stressed on the importance of putting an end to nepotism and sectarianism and gave particular attention to the need to upgrade the agricultural sector in Jordan.

The decision of the Prime Ministry last month to consider the first of January as a national holiday was a point of connection as well. While Islamist Deputy Ahmad Kofahi criticised the decision on Tuesday's session describing it as part of Israeli schemes, Deputy Farah Rabadi said that was not true.

"How can this decision be related to normalisation with Israel," he asked. "This occasion is not specific to one religion or one people only. It is a holiday for all peoples just like labour day."

"Forty years ago, the King gave directives to the government to announce this day as a national holiday while we were still in war with Israel."

Palestinian election in full swing

(Continued from page 1)

considered supporters of Mr. Arafat's dominant Fateh movement. Only 22 are women.

Fateh is presenting 75 official candidates, compared to 21 candidates for the next biggest formal grouping, the Palestinian People's Party, which is opposed to Mr. Arafat's peace policies.

A handful of other parties are either closely aligned to Fateh or impromptu groups formed by independent candidates. Absent from the polls is the hardline Hamas movement, which vehemently opposes Mr. Arafat's peace agreements with Israel.

In Gaza City, headquarters of Mr. Arafat's PNA, schoolchildren roamed the streets Wednesday distributing the candidates' campaign materials, many of them printed days and even weeks ago.

"Together for liberation," together for change," proclaimed one campaign banner hung out by Marwan Kanafani, Mr. Arafat's former spokesman.

In Ramallah, women marked the start of campaigning with a protest march demanding a greater role under self-rule.

"We want equality, we want to be in ministries," chanted about 50 activists, including two women candidates. "We want a civilised state with women's rights."

Hanan Ashrawi, the best-known of the 22 women running for a seat, said the system was "flawed" but that the elections gave women a chance to improve their position.

"This is a source of empowerment, a source of legitimacy," said Ms. Ashrawi, a former spokeswoman for Mr. Arafat.

"The arrest of a human rights worker who has earned the respect of people who support peace and oppose the occupation, harms the peace process and the trust between the two nations," Israel's largest peace group, Peace Now, said in a statement.

Syria, Israel resume talks

(Continued from page 1)

foreign ministry.

Mr. Barak said he expected the Syrians to be more forthcoming about the nature of peace in the talks that were to resume Wednesday in the Wye Plantation conference centre in Maryland.

"I expect further clarification of how they see the possibility of normalisation and cooperation of many sorts, and I look at it in an optimistic way," he said.

Mr. Barak said he did not expect this week's negotiating session to be extended due to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's scheduled visit to the Middle East next week.

Asked about reports Israel might accept monitoring from blimps floating above the Golan, the former Israeli armed forces chief-of-staff left the door open.

"When the time comes, we will look into any possibility that combined with other arrangements will satisfy our basic security and early warning needs," Mr. Barak said.

In Damascus, Syria said the talks should lead directly to discussion of Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

"The first round was exploratory and the second should end with the adoption of a specified agenda topped with the issue of Israel's speedy withdrawal and ways of programming it," the official newspaper Tishreen said.

The Syrian daily agreed with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres when he said the talks provided a rare chance of peace.

The talks, as Mr. Peres said, constitute a rare opportunity ... Israel could make them succeed by seeking a real and honourable peace which returns rights and provides security and dignity to all, the paper said.

Both sides described the first round which ended on Friday as useful and exploratory but said no decisions were made.

Israeli cabinet minister Yossi Beilin, speaking in Jerusalem, said it was difficult to envisage peace in 1996 unless Syria showed flexibility in their talks. Mr. Beilin appealed to Damascus to compromise on its border demands, security arrangements and terms of peace.

Syrian officials in Damascus said the Washington negotiations would move to the discussion of specific issues on withdrawal, security arrangement and future ties.

Diplomats said the outcome would form a basis for talks U.S. Secretary of State Christopher plans to have with Syrian and Israeli leaders during a tour of the region on January 10.

Officials said Syria had strongly rejected Israeli demands for the establishment of early warning posts in the Golan.

Fayez Al Sayegh, director-general of the Syrian news agency (SANA), said in an article published in the official daily Al Thawra on Wednesday that Syria was not aiming to impose its views on Israel but wanted its occupied lands to be returned.

He said any peace formula between Syria and Israel "should end occupation and provide equal and balanced security to all."

The official daily Al Baath urged the United States as a sponsor of the talks outside Washington to press Israel to accept full withdrawal from the Golan.

"The U.S. sponsor should force the Israeli side to accept peace on the basis of the U.N. Security Council resolutions calling for Israeli withdrawal," Al Baath said.

"Burns said Washington was "encouraged by the first round" of talks and the U.S. aim was to "tackle the substantive issues" and figure out a procedural way to move those discussions forward."

Yossi Beilin, the Israeli minister in charge of the peace process, said: "For the moment, we see no change in the Syrian position on the question of normalisation and security arrangements" that would accompany an Israeli retreat from the Golan.

Government, private sector join forces to follow up on MENA summit projects

By Ghalia Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In a bid to maintain the success of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit, the government and the private sector have joined forces to follow up on the implementation of the 100 projects presented during the three-day summit which ended in Amman on Oct. 31, 1995.

The Amman Chamber of Industry has issued a memorandum to follow up on MENA resolutions and recommendations as well as pursue the results of the Euro-Mediterranean conference which was held in Barcelona on Nov. 27-28, 1995.

In the follow-up procedure, the chamber will take into account the results of MENA summit and will work with private sector companies in pursuing what has been achieved in the summit.

It will also identify the characteristics of the 70 projects submitted by the industrial sector, as well as the 30 projects which were presented by the other sectors.

The memorandum stressed the importance of these projects, saying "they reaffirm the degree of the industrial openness through expanding the already existing institutions, as well as enhancing development and export industries to support the industrial base." It will also take into consideration the proposed 50 Palestinian projects which it described as light industries. Twenty-seven of these projects include dyeing and weaving industries with a cost of $294 million.

The remaining projects include gas, medical and traffic light industries.

Israeli projects which the statement said were centred around development industries, include bilateral projects with Jordan or trilateral ones including Egypt.

Jordanian-Israeli projects, which will be financed by the Japanese government, include the development of the northern and central border points, building a railway station to connect Mafraq with Haifa, as well as water projects on the Yarmouk River with an estimated cost of $60-$80 million.

Various public sector ventures include projects in the field of water, electricity and environment as well as industries related to potash and phosphate.

MENA recommendations

The MENA summit agreed to set up a Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development in the Middle East and North Africa which is to be established in Cairo. Negotiations on the bank have not been finalised yet. The bank will have a starting capital of $1.2 billion out of the initial proposed capital of $5 billion. The United States will contribute 21 per cent of the starting capital. Japan 9.5 per cent, Russia six per cent, Italy five per cent, Jordan, Egypt and Palestine four per cent and Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco 1.25 per cent.

Germany, France, Saudi Arabia and some Gulf countries were sceptical about the need for another development bank in the region, saying existing financial structures can play the role of the proposed bank.

The summit also decided to establish a regional tourism board, the Middle East-Mediterranean Travel and Tourism Association and the establishment of a Regional Business Council to promote cooperation and trade among the private sectors of the countries of the region.

Businessmen and representatives from Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, Israel and the United States in addition to other countries will be part of this council.

The establishment of the Economic Summit Executive Secretariat in Rabat to work on advancing the public-private sectors partnership was also agreed on by MENA. However, the mechanism and the structure of the secretariat were not defined. As such, a permanent regional committee for the regional economic development working group of the multilateral phase of the Arab-Israeli talks will be established in Amman.

The King's Speech from the Throne

The memorandum took a close look at His Majesty King Hussein's Speech from the Throne which he delivered at the opening of the Parliament's annual four-month session. The memorandum said the speech revealed Jordan's pressing priorities in the field of economy.

In his speech, the King stressed the importance of placing Jordan on the economic map of the world, taking advantage of its strategic location, security and stability.

The King praised the success of the Amman Economic Summit which, he said, was the crowning achievement of Jordan's efforts, and came as a natural result of the era of peace.

He added that through the coordination efforts of the dedicated Jordanians from the public as well as the private sectors, Jordan was able to highlight its civilised accomplishments in terms of preparation, organisation and presentation of feasible projects.

The King also stressed the importance of providing more basic services, attracting numerous investments and creating new job opportunities.

His Majesty also said that the government is working on strengthening the structure of Jordan's national economy through a model framework of partnership with the European Union (EU), and through joining the World Trade Organisation.

The memorandum proposed that investors in the 98 projects and the potash and phosphate companies be called for a meeting to estimate the response to the individual projects as well as evaluate the results.

It said a meeting for those involved in tourism projects could be held at the chamber.

EU industry unions and businessmen who participated in the Valencia conference, held on Oct. 24-25, will be invited here, where they will be acquainted with the investment climate in the Kingdom, the memorandum said.

To gain EU support, private sector projects will be presented to the European businessmen to let them know about Jordan's industrial needs and investment opportunities and find ways to explore them.

The chamber will also inform economic institutions in Gulf countries about the private sector projects and the potential for joint projects.

The memorandum added that Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, along with the delegation which participated in the Barcelona Conference, will also be invited to discuss the results of the conference as well as the private sector's role in following up those results.

It said that the chamber will look for an opportunity to hold an investment seminar for the Jordanian-Greek Joint Committee, as Greece has the experience of attracting European investments.

Meanwhile, the government has formed a committee to follow-up on the results of MENA summit and pursue what has been tackled in the meetings, seminars and business meetings between both the private and the public sectors.

CBJ official: Banks are free to open accounts in shekel

By Tareq Ayoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A senior official at the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) said Wednesday that the bank has no objection to dealing with Israeli currency by money changers and banks, and said that banks are free to open accounts for clients in shekels.

The official, who asked not to be named, added that following the signing of the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel, and the removal of 47 years of economic embargo against the Jewish state it "became normal to deal in its shekels."

"We have not issued a circulation to the banks in this regard, but the CBJ has no objection to such dealings especially after the end of state of war and a new era of peace in the region," the official added.

Banking circles in Amman said that they were not ready to open accounts and deal with Israeli currency for several reasons.

"Israeli currency, unlike other currencies, is not a stable one and it is difficult to deal with it," said a bank official. "Due to the regulations of the Central Bank of Israel, it is difficult to deal with shekels. It is not easy to transfer the shekel from inside and outside Israel," another official said.

In October, Jordan elaminated the economic embargo against Israel and opened the gate wide for Jordanian business community to deal with the Jewish state. The two sides also signed a trade accord to regulate the economic transaction between Amman and Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile, chairman of the Jordan Moneychangers Association, Monte'e Kabariti said that Jordanian money change shops were ready to deal with shekels but due to technical problems, some money changers hesitate to deal with the currency.

"The shekel is unstable currency and due to the scarcity of this currency we rarely find any dealing with it," he said.

"Following the peace with Israel, it became ordinary to deal with it... but tourists who come to Jordan (Israeli tourists) they prefer to bring with them Jordanian dinar's or dollars. They rarely bring shekels," Mr. Kabariti said in an interview with the Jordan Times.

Canadian trade minister begins visit to Jordan today

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Canadian Minister for International Trade Roy MacLaren, will visit Jordan from Jan. 4-6, 1996, the Canadian embassy announced. The purpose of this visit is to confirm Canada's support for the process launched at the Amman economic summit and to strengthen bilateral economic relations. Mr. MacLaren will be supporting projects already underway between Canada and Jordan and identifying further opportunities for the near future," the embassy statement said.

The Minister will be the guest of Trade and Industry Minister Ali Abul Ragheb. He will be meeting with the minister of postal affairs and communications, Jamal Sarraireh, the minister of transport, Samir Kawar and the minister of foreign affairs, Abdul Karim Al Kabariti. He will visit the Amman Financial Market and meet with its director, Oumayya Touqan. He will also have discussions with a broad spectrum of Jordanian business leaders because Canada looks to the private sector to provide much of the impetus for bilateral economic ties.

Canada has always had close political ties to Jordan and has always seen Jordan as a key to peace in the region. "Our economic ties must develop in a way that matches those political ties and we hope to see more Canadian investment in Jordan as well as equity partnerships and joint ventures," explained Canadian Ambassador Michel de Salaberry.

He said: "Forging greater commercial and economic ties with Jordan is a priority for Canada, a part of a readjustment of our overall relations with a peaceful Middle East. A peace that lasts requires that economic growth be seen to flow from it. Canada wants to share in that growth."

Government shutdown has U.S. diplomats, businesses in bind

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The government shutdown has embarrassed U.S. diplomats, emptied foreign aid coffers and pushed federal workers to the breaking point and U.S. companies are worried the effects will be lasting.

"Everyone's beginning to fray around the edges," said State Department spokesman John Dinger.

Embassy staff have taken pay cuts and been stripped of their entertainment and travel allowances, and Mr. Dinger said many missions have had to take up emergency collections to pay for secretaries and guards.

The 19-day shutdown sparked by the budget impasse in Washington has also piled up a backlog of some 120,000 passport applications and 30,000 visa requests that could take until March to catch up on.

Companies big and small are feeling the pinch, with contractors missing out on the big government bucks and businesses losing customers because of the massive lay-offs.

"People are in a non-spending mode and we're concerned about how long that's going to last," said Carroll Bull, manager of the Capitol Brewing Company restaurant.

The standoff between President Bill Clinton and the Republican-led Congress has three-quarters of a million federal workers here and abroad either laid off or working without pay.

A deal is being hashed out to issue another emergency spending bill to keep the government running until a budget agreement is reached, but even if that happens soon many like Ms. Bull are concerned about the future.

Economic development vital to success of Israel-PLO accord

NABLUS, West Bank (AFP) — As Israel and the Palestinians complete their political separation, the two sides will have to develop ever closer economic ties to assure stability and the success of their peace accord, officials say.

"It is in Israel's interest to promote economic development in the Palestinian areas," said Ibrahim Abdul Hadi, director of the Arab Insurance Company and president of the newly created Palestine Business Council. "Nobody wants hungry neighbours."

Yossi Shochat, overseeing Israeli-Palestinian business cooperation at Israel's ministry of trade and industry, shares a similar view, saying that economic development in the newly autonomous areas is vital to both sides.

He said the income gap has to be narrowed between Israelis, whose average annual income is $15,000, and Palestinians, who earn about $1,500.

"If we don't increase the standard of living for Palestinians, it will lead to unrest," Mr. Shochat said.

In a preliminary step towards economic cooperation, Israel and the Palestinian Authority inaugurated their first international business centre in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday to promote investments in the Palestinian territories.

Ms. Shochat is also directing a programme to build "special industrial zones" (SIZ) in Israel alongside the Gaza Strip and newly autonomous areas on the West Bank that would employ Palestinian workers.

The zones have drawn interest, including on-site inspections, from international clothing manufacturers such as Levi Strauss, H. Boss, Adidas, Diadora and Benetton, Mr. Shochat said.

He said labour-intensive industries could help bring down the Palestinians' high unemployment rate, estimated at about 40 per cent, and their wages would be based on a balance between Israeli laws and "the need to create maximum employment in a short period of time."

The wages would be taxed in the Palestinian areas, providing revenue for the self-rule government, Mr. Shochat said, adding that the SIZs give investors the security of being in Israel and access to a large labour force.

"For the near future, there is a sense of reluctance within the international and the Israeli business community to invest inside the autonomy areas," Mr. Shochat said.

However, Mr. Abdul Hadi said the focus of Palestinian economic development has to be within the autonomous areas.

"We need to build industrial parks inside the Palestinian areas and not in Israel," he said. "The industry and infrastructure have to be improved and developed within the autonomous areas."

Mr. Abdul Hadi admits Palestinian economic development is dependent on Israeli cooperation because it controls all access in and out of the autonomous areas, which are spread out as small enclaves on the West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip, with Israel patrolling everything in between.

"They can cripple our economy in an instant by closing off our borders for so-called 'security reasons,'" he said.

Israel has sealed off Palestinian areas several times over the last few years, throwing thousands of Palestinians temporarily out of work, after deadly bomb attacks in Israel claimed by Palestinian militant groups opposed to the peace process.

Hisham Awartani, a leading Palestinian economist and advisor to several companies, said Israel has to allow for a free flow of goods, people and services in and out of the autonomous areas if they are to attract investors and develop economically.

He also said that Israel will have to substantially boost trade with the autonomous territories.

Since the Israeli-PLO autonomy accord in 1993, economic activity in the Palestinian territories has shrunk from $3 billion to $2.5 billion because Israel has imported fewer Palestinian agricultural products and drastically curtailed its use of Palestinian workers, Mr. Awartani said.

"Access to one of our largest markets has been cut off," Mr. Awartani said.

Ephraim Kleiman, professor of economics at Hebrew University, said Israel realises that it does not economically need the Palestinian areas, but should understand that sustained development in the territories is essential to peace and stability.

"It's politically vital for Israel, and an economic necessity for the Palestinians," Mr. Kleiman said.

Save water... every drop counts!

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

"I was a difficult child. To this day, I still can't walk down the cereal aisle without having a tantrum."

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TELMA

HUTOM

YELMIT

NEBING

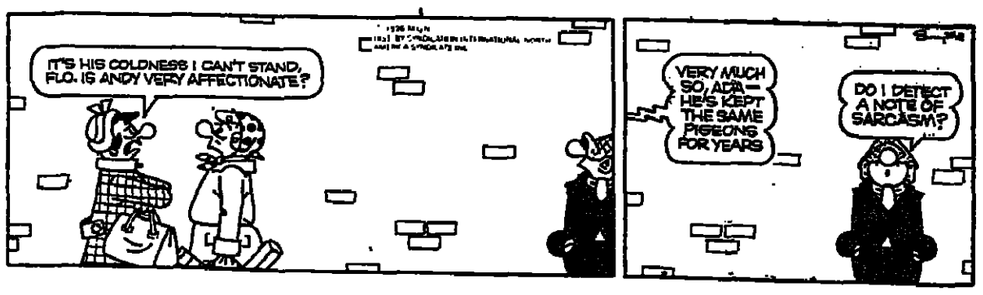
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: (Answers tomorrow)

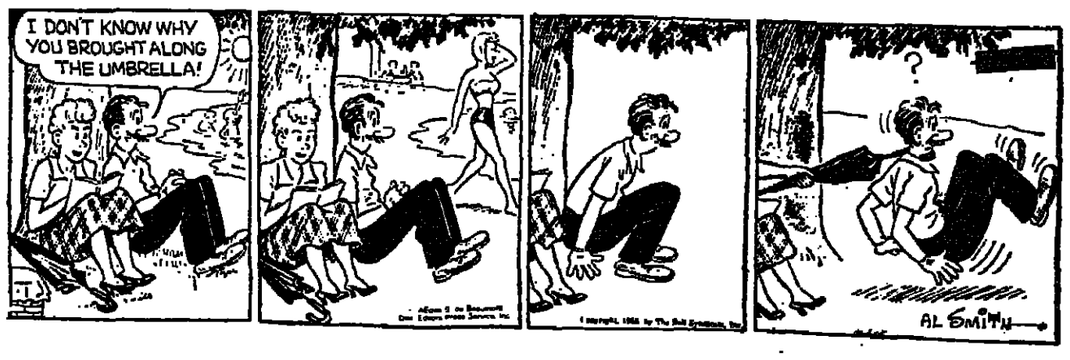
Yesterday's Jumbles: IVORY CLOUT AMBUSH WEASEL
Answer: What the apple eating contest came down to — THE CORE ISSUE

Peanuts

Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY JANUARY 4, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You want to make some drastic changes at this time, but this would only bring bizarre persons into your life, so hold on to the tried and true.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You may be financially worried and feel like doing something drastic, but don't, or you get into deeper difficulties which could be detrimental.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You want to get off to new places and people to improve your luck, but which could make a mistake, so listen to advice given by fellow associates.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You think you have to do your duties differently to get good results, but the only thing needed is to be more businesslike.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Forget strange kinds of amusements you know little about and be with individuals of wealth and character who can be beneficial.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You have to be persevering in the business world if you are to be successful and not permit loved ones to interfere in your affairs.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You have made new contacts lately, but it is best you concentrate on those you know are successful and not those who are visionary.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) In practical affairs listen to advice of family ties regarding more activity in the business world and you will be very successful.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your outside fellow associate give fine ideas for making your talents pay off more handsomely at this time for you to be prosperous.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Routine affairs should be handled today in such a fashion that higher-ups are pleased with the efforts which you put in.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Tone down your usually dynamic way out of handling activities so that do not wear yourself out and make yourself ill in the process.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Use more accepted systems if you want to get ahead faster. Don't act discontented as it could be a deterrent to your progress.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 5, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Come to a better understanding with your loved one in the morning today, and then later tonight carry through with this plan.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Handle financial affairs with thought for the rights of others and all will go well. Make out a more workable budget at this time.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You are magnetic in the morning today, and others will do as you desire, but later this evening you may run up against stumbling blocks.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Try to please one who is devoted to you in the morning today, even if you must treat a disturbed friend tactfully in an effort to be kind.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you are cooperative in the morning today, a favour may come your way, but later tonight you may find it difficult to gain your personal aims.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This morning is the best time to handle important outside affairs since later this evening you may have to cope with difficulties.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Look into some new outlet which can assist you in gaining your aims, and put it to work. Rest and relax with loved ones this evening.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Get your business affairs in good order and then stay indoors since the aspects are not favourable later this evening for you or loved ones.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) A fellow associate will be supportive in the morning today, but later this evening will not be bery cooperative. Try to build up your bank account.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Try to get your surroundings more charming early today and then get to career activities with vim and vigour for you to be successful.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Plan recreation for the evening today since later there is much routine activities to do. Get the OK from your mate for a social event.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Get some new activity going at home in the morning today, then make your surroundings far more charming for the one under your roof.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Merchants resist pressure to lower coffee prices

Obeidat: Documents obtained from 'official sources' verified

By Ghalia Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The president of the National Society for Consumer Protection (NSCP), Mohammad Obeidat, said Wednesday that the society will not reveal the figures and documents it has on coffee prices until it finishes the process of analysing them.

In a meeting held at the society, Dr. Obeidat told reporters and representatives of unions and associations that the documents were obtained by the society from "official sources" and that they were verified.

"Our figures and documents which we prefer not to reveal in the meantime, support our stand, and based on that, we called for the support of concerned parties," Dr. Obeidat said referring to the coffee-boycott campaign which the society launched 11 days ago to force merchants to bring down coffee prices.

Dr. Obeidat said that although the campaign achieved "wide" support, merchants did not respond to the society's call to lower the prices of different kinds of coffee.

He added that the figures, which the minister of supply presented in a press conference last week, were much higher than the ones presented by some merchants who had earlier expressed willingness to cooperate with the society.

Dr. Obeidat has told the Jordan Times that the society rejected the ministry's intervention in its conflict with merchants.

"The government has nothing to do with this case as the market economy is based on supply and demand," Dr. Obeidat said. "Coffee is a floating-price commodity, therefore the ministry should not interfere between consumers and merchants.

The NSCP had an open dialogue Wednesday with merchants, representatives from the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce and the secretary general of the Ministry of Supply.

Dr. Obeidat said that during the meeting, the ministry insisted that its figures were right. But, he added, those figures contradict the ministry's letter on the same subject in June 1994.

However, Dr. Obeidat said that some people from the federation showed flexibility towards the campaign.

As for the dialogue which Dr. Obeidat had called for between the society and merchants, he said that customs documents on all kinds of coffee should be provided and analysed by all parties involved.

He said that the NSCP met members of the Lower House of Parliament who had earlier promised to present the case to the House. But they did not yet make any move, Dr. Obeidat added.

Asked about other high-priced commodities and low salaries, Dr. Obeidat said that if those prices were reduced, it is as if the consumers' salaries were increased.

"If we succeed in lowering the prices of five or six commodities, the purchasing power of the consumer will be increased by about JD 20," Dr. Obeidat said, referring to the campaigns which the society will launch in the future.

"We informed merchants that a lot of other campaigns to lower price on various commodities will be launched," he added.

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 03/01/1996

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	2420	556900	231.000	231.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	75710	334674	4.510	4.500
BANK OF JORDAN	25050	92251	3.800	3.750
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK.	2260	2657	1.220	1.200
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	47037	116655	2.510	2.510
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/NEW	504831	1206546	2.330	2.390
THE HOUSING BANK	191850	909241	4.850	4.740
JORDAN KUWAIT BANK	445	1264	2.900	2.840
JORDAN GULF BANK	37284	40904	1.090	1.080
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	61166	220168	3.510	3.580
UNION BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	16000	48800	3.150	3.050
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	1833	6779	3.750	3.700
BEIT ELMAL SAVING&INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	950	3056	3.230	3.210
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	47875	43130	.920	.900
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	16450	24754	1.520	1.480
BANKS SECTOR	1031161	3607777	INDEX NUMBER: 184.79 CHANGE : -0.26%	
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	10915	30562	2.750	2.800
AL-NISR AL-ARABI INSURANCE	300	1233	4.300	4.110
INSURANCE SECTOR	11215	31795	INDEX NUMBER: 130.55 CHANGE : -0.17%	
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	14926	25971	1.760	1.740
JORDAN HOTEL & TOURISM	1478	13164	8.750	8.900
IRBID DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	400	509	1.290	1.270
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	200	354	1.800	1.770
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	2200	2200	1.010	1.000
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	2530	2934	1.170	1.160
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	2300	5060	2.210	2.200
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	3250	10963	3.420	3.380
JORDANIAN EXPATRIATES INVESTMENT HOLDING	1000	1110	1.090	1.110
ZARKA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	1350	1620	1.210	1.200
UNIFIED CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	6000	13455	2.250	2.250
SERVICES SECTOR	35754	78001	INDEX NUMBER: 129.44 CHANGE : -0.57%	
ATTANQEEB CONST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	250	300	1.200	1.200
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	4042	14675	3.650	3.630
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	900	2922	3.370	3.230
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	4573	46668	10.270	10.200
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	773	2782	3.550	3.600
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	1560	6972	4.520	4.490
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	2750	16688	6.250	6.100
JORDAN DAIRY	100	260	2.550	2.600
THE PUBLIC MINING	500	1452	2.940	2.910
ARAB CHEMICAL DETERGENTS INDUSTRIES	600	7220	12.200	12.200
RAFIA INDUSTRIES	1000	2190	2.180	2.180
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	800	4240	5.300	5.300
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	16250	9830	.600	.600
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	950	1359	1.430	1.430
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	22500	36985	1.650	1.650
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	5550	5674	1.040	1.020
INTERMEDIATE PETRO CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	200	340	1.700	1.700
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES	2490	2737	1.110	1.090
JORDAN SULPHO-CHEMICALS	500	640	2.330	1.280
PANTHER INVESTMENT	300	465	1.590	1.550
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	1300	4108	3.185	3.160
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	7500	14978	2.040	1.990
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	27550	39438	1.460	1.420
EL-ZAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	5100	11320	2.260	2.220
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	7016	9746	1.400	1.390
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	115084	244055	INDEX NUMBER: 124.79 CHANGE : -0.79%	
GRAND TOTAL	1193214	3961629	INDEX NUMBER: 155.28 CHANGE : -0.60%	

NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 155165
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 136371

Euro stocks set records in new year buying spree

LONDON (R) — European stock markets surged past record levels Wednesday as investors went on a new year buying spree, encouraged by Wall Street's biggest one-day leap in seven months.

London's FTSE 100 index jumped 0.75 per cent smashing its second record in two days. Other bourses to surprass all-time trading peaks included Frankfurt, Zurich, Amsterdam, Brussels and Oslo.

"People were surprised by Wall Street and this continues last year's story," said SBC Warburg strategist George Hodgson. "Most people are pretty cynical about how much further Wall Street can go but obviously while it is going up, so will we."

Cheered by New York's jump and U.S. figures that prompted hopes of lower interest rates, London's stocks raced ahead to 3,716.3 points at one stage, eclipsing the previous best of 3,696.5, set Tuesday.

"The strong impetus from Wall Street helped the market break through 3,700 and we'll see it push further this afternoon with nothing negative in the frame," said SGST Group chief economist Ian Harnett.

Despite the optimism, trading volume was thin, perhaps because of lingering worries about possibilities of an early election after last week's defection of a member of parliament cut the ruling Conservatives slender majority.

The big rally in Europe's key bourses was fuelled by New York's strong overnight performance when the Dow Jones index climbed 60 points to 5,177.45 as investors returned to the market after the New Year break. It was the biggest gain since its 86-point rise on May 31.

U.S. investors saw healthier stocks prospects particularly after telecommunications giant ATT corp. said it would cut nearly 40,000 jobs and take a massive restructuring charge.

Wall Street was also helped by news that manufacturing slowed for the fifth consecutive month in December, raising prospects that the federal reserve will lower interest rates soon to stimulate the economy.

The hesitation reflected in London's low trading volume was matched in some other European centres. In Frankfurt, the IBIS Dax share index shot to a high but dealers said the market lacked stamina amid low cash volumes.

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Wednesday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3542/52	Canadian dollar
	1.4388/98	Deutschemarks
	1.6110/20	Dutch guilders
	1.1588/98	Swiss francs
	29.57/61	Belgian francs
	4.9133/83	French francs
	1567.9/9.4	Italian lire
	104.50/60	Japanese yen
	6.5960/60	Swedish crowns
	6.3370/20	Norwegian crowns
	5.5658/58	Danish crowns
	1.4172/82	Singapore dollars
	0.7462/67	Australian dollars
	7.7338/48	Hong Kong dollars
One sterling	$1.5524/34	
Gold (ounce)	$390.25/390.65	

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Foreign companies seek investments at Jordanian-Syrian free zone

☆☆ THE Jordanian-Syrian Industrial Free Zone Company is currently studying many applications from Dutch, German and U.S. investors to set up installations related to trading in cars and various equipment, the company's board chairman Falah Qudah has said. He pointed out that the company has recently approved many commercial applications for investors. Mr. Qudah, who is also director-general of the Jordanian Free Zones Corporation, said that the new border post and the company's customs centre, expected to be built in Daraa', would encourage other investors to submit applications for investments especially that the new international highway between Jordan and Syria is now ready.

Mr. Qudah said that by the end of 1995, a total of 12 investment projects were set up in the zone and that the company was providing an encouraging climate for Arab investments through extending attractive facilities to industrial, commercial and agricultural businessmen. There were only two projects in 1990, but the number increased to nine in 1993 before rising to 12 in 1994-1995. The zone covers an area of six million square metres, half of it in Jordanian land and the other half is in Syrian territory (Al Dustour)

Prices of eggs lowered

☆☆ THE pricing committee at the Ministry of Supply decided to reduce the price of a carton of eggs weighing 1950 grammes and over to JD 1.400 from JD 1.500 and the carton weighing between 1750 grammes and 1900 grammes to JD 1.350. Egg cartons weighing between 1550 grammes and 1700 grammes will cost JD 1.250 with any weights lesser than 150 grammes costing JD 1.150. According to Sameeh Al Madani, head of the society for egg production and marketing, the new prices would only leave a tiny profit margin for poultry farmers at this period. But, he said, consumption of eggs would decline over the coming days, especially with the advent of the Holy month of Ramadan, and that will undoubtedly result in losses for the sector. Mr. Madani indicated that there were 276 egg-chicken farms in the past but due to losses 126 farms were forced to close. He noted that inputs of soya, fodder concentrates and corn have surged in prices and that many small poultry farms could not stay in business (Al Dustour).

United Financial Investments becomes public shareholding company

☆☆ THE United Financial Investments Company, a private shareholding company established in 1980 with a JD 150,000 capital, has changed its status into a public shareholding company with a JD 1.5 million capital. The company will continue to act as a brokerage firm at the Amman Financial Market but will also conduct studies and financial analysis to help investor make their investment decisions. In addition, the company will provide mutual and trust fund services, participate in establishing new companies and extend credit facilities for investments in the stock exchange. According to Nasser Al Amad, the company's general manager, the change in status was necessitated by the drive to raise capital adequacy for brokerage fims and by the desire to expand the activities of the company to meet the anticipated growth at the stock market over the coming five years. The founding general assembly elected Mohammad Abdul Ghani Al Amad as board chairman, Abdullah Sadeq Arafat as vice-chairman and Yousef Ibrahim Qaqish, Kamal Kamel Zakaria, Imad Mudar Badran and Nasser Al Amad as board members (Al Ra'i).

New fares for airport taxi

☆☆ ACCORDING to new fares fixed by the minister of transport, the airport taxi opening charge is JD 1.500. The fare for each kilometre is 150 fils and 10 fils for each 48 seconds of waiting. The minister's decision exempted two suitcases or parcels of luggage from any charges carried by the taxi to/from the airport. Any additional luggage will be subject to 250 fils for each suitcase or parcel. Handbags or any other item carried by hand will not be charged. The charges are applicable from the airport to all areas in the country (Al Aswaq).

Financial Markets — Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Closing Date 2-1-96	Hongkong Closing Date 5-1-96
Sterling Pound	1.5545	1.5589**
Deutsche Mark	1.4372	1.4377
Swiss Franc	1.1590	1.1560**
French Franc	4.9061	4.9087**
Japanese Yen	103.92	104.25
European Currency Unit	1.2763	1.2792**

USD Per STL.
European Opening at 9.00 a.m. GMT

Precious Metals Date: 3.1.1996

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	390.40	7.70	Silver	5.36	0.100

21 karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin Date: 3.1.1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0986	1.1041
Deutsche Mark	0.4918	0.4943
Swiss Franc	0.6105	0.6134
French Franc	0.1442	0.1449
Japanese Yen	0.6802	0.6636
Dutch Guilder	0.4393	0.4415
Swedish Krona	******	*******
Italian Lira	0.0451	0.0453
Belgian Franc	******	******

Per 100

Other Currencies Date: 3.1.1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8620	1.8760
Lebanese Lira	0.043775	0.044460
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1898
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3870
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2200
Omani Riyal	1.8330	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1935
Greek Drachma	0.2850	0.3120
Cypriot Pound	1.5108	1.5706

Per 100

JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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Havelange launches pre-emptive strike for reelection

PARIS (R) — By pledging the 2006 World Cup finals to Africa, FIFA chief Joao Havelange has launched a pre-emptive strike to win world soccer's governing body.

Havelange told the Brazilian newspaper Jornal do Brasil in an interview that he would personally tell South African President Nelson Mandela that the World Cup will be on their continent. Africa has the right to hold its first World Cup," he was quoted as saying.

The move will be seen in international soccer circles as part of Havelange's power struggle with European football union (UEFA) boss Lennart Johansson, a declared candidate for the FIFA presidency at the next elections in 1998.

The decision to award the 2006 finals will not be taken for another four years and is a matter for the whole of FIFA, not just its president. But that counts for little in the grand scheme of world soccer politics.

Havelange said in 1994 that his sixth four-year term as FIFA president, ending in 1998, would be his last. But his stance has changed since then and he has openly suggested he may well stand again.

In tactical terms, with European countries expected to line up solidly behind Johansson, Havelange would need to be able to count on votes from the African continent — and what better way to win them than by pledging the World Cup finals?

It's a gamble which could even win the day. Havelange has successfully countered challenges to his leadership before with astute ploys to disarm his rivals.

He looked highly vulnerable just before the last election in 1994 when there was ill-disguised irritation among many FIFA members about his autocratic style.

When UEFA considered putting up a candidate against him, Havelange pulled off a master stroke, increasing the size of the World Cup finals from 24 to 32, a classic exercise in divide-and-rule strategy.

With the continental confederations all squabbling about who should get the extra eight berths, there was no chance of their uniting behind any rival to his presidency and so he was reelected by acclamation.

This time, Havelange has clearly found the weak point in the campaign of Sweden's Johansson, a FIFA vice-president.

At the 1994 FIFA congress in Chicago, Africa pushed for World Cup finals to be rotated among each continent in a bid to break the traditional pattern under which Europe and America staged the event alternately.

The move was blocked by Europe and South America but was resurrected by UEFA in their vision one reform package last year when they tried to attract worldwide support for plans to weaken Havelange's authority.

But Johansson has a problem because Germany is bidding for the 2006 finals and UEFA want the rotation to start then.

Havelange has turned the move against him by arguing the rotation principle should start after the 1998 finals already awarded to France, which would mean Europe not staging the World Cup again until 2018.

That's a horrifying thought that UEFA could not contemplate — but it suits the rest of the world with Asia getting the 2002 event, Africa staging it in 2006 and South America and then North America having the finals in 2010 and 2014 respectively.

Johansson has wisely kept a low profile since Havelange started showing his potentially vote-winning trump card but he can still hope the Brazilian's plan will misfire.

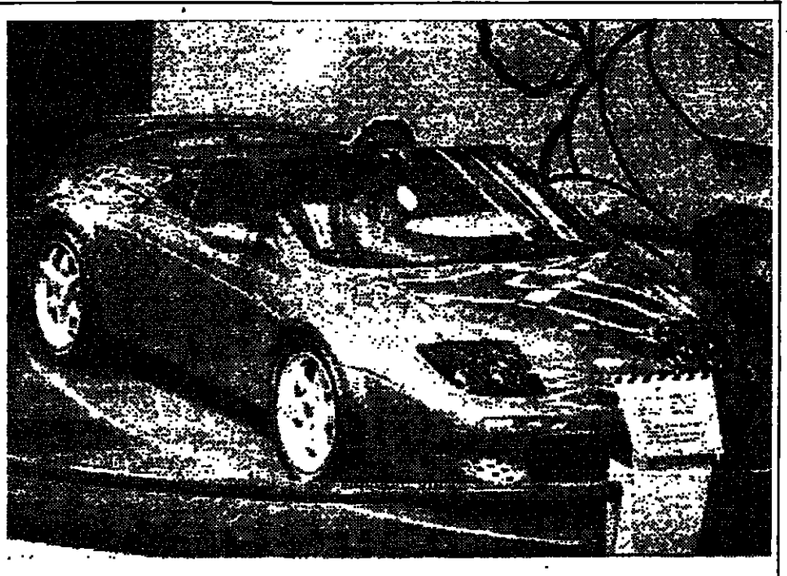
Havelange lost a lot of credibility late last year when he paid a visit to Nigeria and left the impression FIFA would award them the World Youth Championship in 1997 in place of Malaysia.

With Nigeria attracting worldwide political disapproval of its human rights record. FIFA decided in December to stick to Malaysia in what amounted to a snub of its own president.

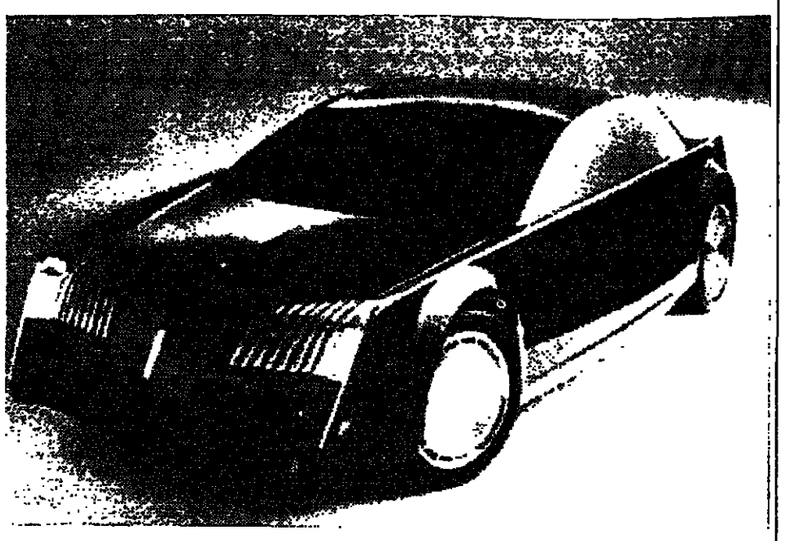
Havelange's pledge to Mandela could also be seen as further evidence of FIFA's president taking a dictatorial stance though whether this would prompt a rush of votes for Johansson remains to be seen.

The amiable Swede has shown little appetite so far for the political rough and tumble in which Havelange both revels and excels and many in FIFA circles believe the Brazilian can be ousted only by another challenger emerging from the Third World.

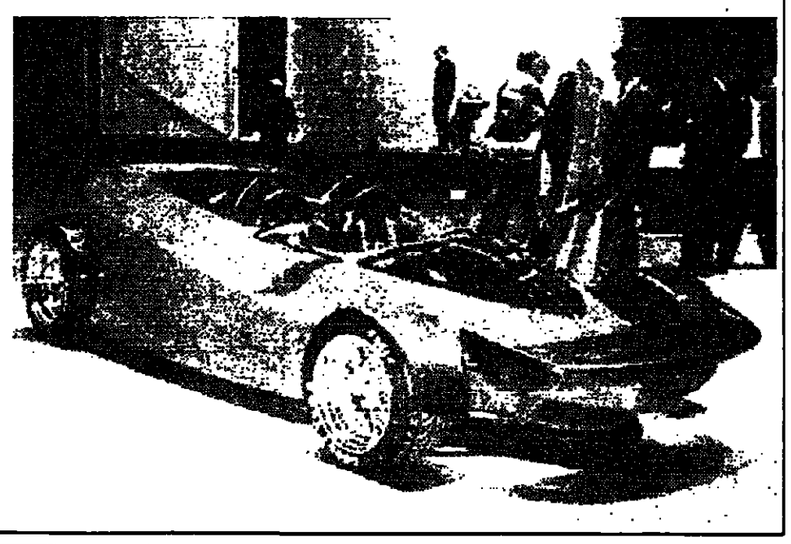
The man they are watching is African Confederation president Issa Hayatou of Cameroun but he has given no hint at all that he would be prepared to stand against Havelange.



Korean manufacturer Kia unveiled the KMS-II at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit's Cobo Center. KMS-II, a Lotus Elan-based roadster prototype, has been redesigned by Kia's research and development center (Reuters photo)



Ford Motor Co. introduced the Ford Indigo, a two-seat V-12-powered concept sports car, during a media briefing at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit's Cobo Center (Reuters photo)



Ford Motor Co. introduced the Lincoln Sentinel, a full-size 4-door luxury concept sports car, during a media briefing at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit's Cobo Center. The Sentinel is Ford's latest example of New Edge design (Reuters photo)

76ers upset Lakers; NY lose

INGLEWOOD (R) — Vernon Maxwell scored 22 points, including the game-winning shot with 46 seconds remaining, to lift the Philadelphia 76ers to a rare 90-89 road victory over the Los Angeles Lakers Tuesday.

Rookie Jerry Stackhouse added 20 points and 10 rebounds as Philadelphia snapped a five-game losing streak and won for just the second time on the road this season (2-12).

Maxwell, who scored 10 points in the final quarter, took the ball in the left corner before driving the lane and putting up a floater.

"Basically I was trying to get to the basket and draw a foul," Maxwell said. "Luckily the shot went in and we came away with the win."

The Lakers had two last chances, but Nick Van Exel missed a layup and Cedric Ceballos could not convert a follow shot.

Van Exel finished with 27 points and nine assists for Los Angeles, which has lost three straight and are 11-4 at home this season. The Lakers had won seven of their last eight home games.

Trevor Ruffin finished with 20 points and Clarence Weatherspoon had 12 and 13 rebounds for the Sixers.

"We were really sluggish, slow and didn't look like we could get it done," Sixers coach John Lucas said. "But we just kept working and working until we found a combination that worked. We slowly picked away and got back in the game."

In New York, Aaron McKie scored 24 points and Rod Strickland added 22 as the Portland Trail Blazers snapped a two-game losing streak, 101-92 over the struggling Knicks.

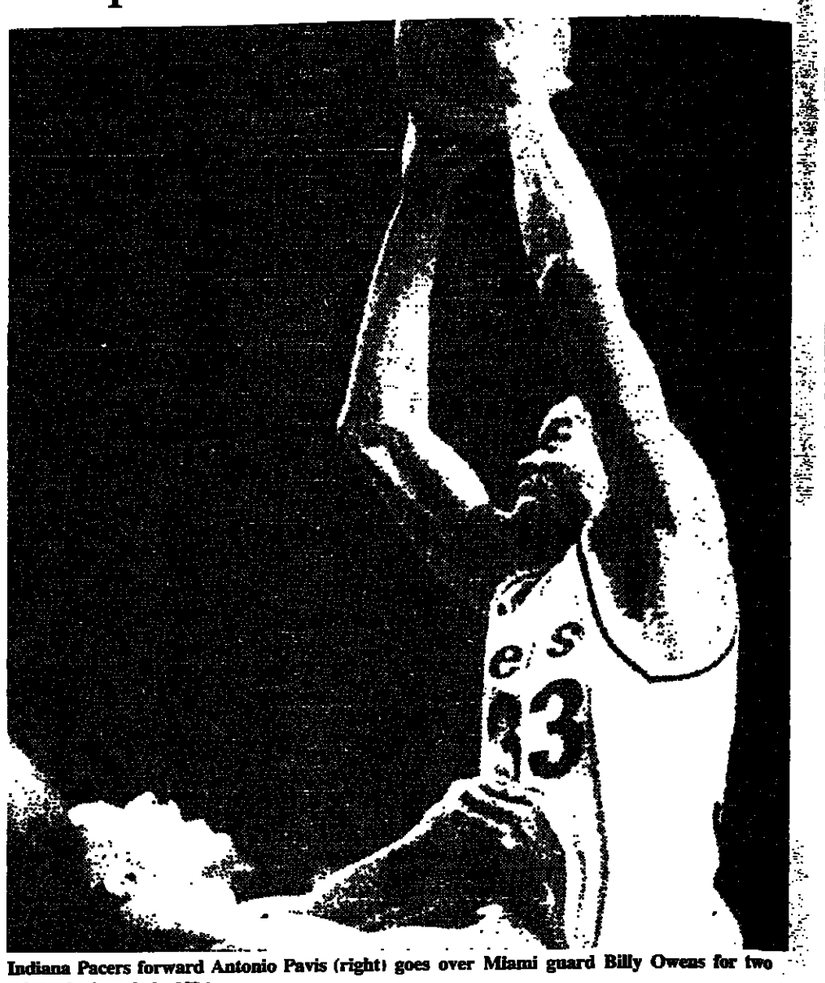
Clifford Robinson scored 21 points for Portland, which snapped a three-game losing streak at Madison Square Garden and beat New York for the second time this season.

New York played without all-star centre Patrick Ewing, who sat out his second straight game with a sprained right ankle. The Knicks have lost both games.

Derek Harper scored 16 of his team-high 22 points in the third quarter for New York, which has lost a season-high three straight and four of its last five.

Portland's Lithuanian giant Arvydas Sabonis came off the bench to score 18 points in just 22 minutes.

At New Jersey, Shawn Bradley had 17 points, 14 rebounds and seven blocks and the Nets held the Milwaukee Bucks scoreless for nearly four minutes down the stretch in an 81-72 victory that snapped a four-game losing streak.



Indiana Pacers forward Antonio Pavis (right) goes over Miami guard Billy Owens for two points during their NBA game

Armon Gilliam scored 15 points and Kenny Anderson added 12 for the Nets.

Four players scored 10 points for the Bucks, who got just two points in the final 3:44, a dunk at the buzzer by Vin Baker.

In Atlanta, Frank Brickowski scored a season-high 21 points and Hersey Hawking added 19 as the Seattle Supersonics routed the Hawks 111-88 for their sixth straight victory.

Andrew Lang scored a career-high 29 points on 14-of-19 shooting and Mookie Blaylock added 16 for Atlanta, which lost for the fourth time in five games.

In Dallas, Karl Malone had 29 points and 13 rebounds and John Stockton added 18 points and 15 assists as the Utah Jazz defeated the Mavericks 102-92 for their fourth straight win.

Jason Kidd and Jim Jackson each scored 23 points for Dallas, which has lost eight of nine overall and seven of eight at home.

Malone, named the NBA player of the week earlier in the day, has tied or led the Jazz in scoring in their last 17 games. He pulled down 13 rebounds. Stockton had 15 assists.

In Denver, Reggie Miller, Mark Jackson and Ricky Pierce scored 15 points apiece as the Indiana Pacers cruised to a 102-87 victory over the Nuggets.

Rookie Antonio McDyess scored 21 points and Bryant Stitch added 12 for Denver, which lost for the eight time in 12 games. Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, who was suffering from a stomach flu, was held to six points.

At Minnesota, Hakeem Olajuwon scored 28 points and Sam Cassell added 15 of his 25 in the fourth quarter as the Houston Rockets rallied for their fourth straight win, 105-100 over the Timber wolves.

Olajuwon added 11 rebounds and eight assists and Cassell had eight assists.

Tom Gugliotta had 25 points and a season-high 17 rebounds, Isaiah Rider added 18 points and Terry Porter handed out 15 assists for Minnesota, which fell to 1-7 under new coach Flip Saunders.

At Washington, Terrell Brandon had 27 points and 10 assists and Chris Mills and Danny Ferry chipped in 20 points apiece to lead the red-hot Cleveland Cavaliers to a 108-100 victory over the Bullets.

Cleveland has won 16 of its last 21 games after an 0-7 start.

Washington, which played without forward Chris Webber and guard Calbert Cheaney, had a three-game winning streak and a six-game home skein come to an end.

NBA RESULTS

Seattle	111	Atlanta	88
New Jersey	81	Milwaukee	72
Portland	101	New York	92
Cleveland	108	Washington	100
Houston	105	Minnesota	100
Utah	102	Dallas	92
Indiana	102	Denver	87
Philadelphia	90	LA Lakers	89

Newcastle pull away again

LONDON (AFP) — Kevin Keegan's Newcastle pulled away at the top of the English Premiership again after Tuesday's 2-0 win over Arsenal.

The flying Magpies, who saw nearest rivals Manchester United crash 4-1 at Tottenham on Monday, drew seven points clear, reaching 48 points afte a comprehensive home victory.

The Tynesiders began explosively and owed their immediate advantage to another touch of French finesse from left winger David Ginola, just seconds after kick-off.

The former Paris Saint Germain star latched onto a short pass from Paul Kitson on the edge of the Gunners' box and let fly, his bending shot from the outside of his right foot nestling in the top right hand corner despite David Seaman's touch.

Arsenal had not managed to get possession before Seaman was picking the ball out the back of his net.

Their best effort to level before the break came within a minute of that disastrous opening, Dutchman Dennis Bergkamp linking with Iran Wright before Paul Merson saw his shot saved by Pavel Srnicek at the second opportunity.

Newcastle, now with 11 wins from 11 home starts this season, began the second half as dramatically as the first.

They made it 2-0 minutes after the break when a long ball from Warren Barton over the Arsenal back four was controlled by Les Ferdinand.

Seaman again got a hand to his effort but the ball ended up in the left corner, allowing Ferdinand to celebrate his 22nd goal of the season.

Minutes later, it could have been three but Seaman's luck changed at last as he managed to push Kitson's effort onto the left post.

Arsenal had their moments, David Platt and Tony Adams going close, but it should have been three for Newcastle when Ferdinand got on the end of a one-two with Kitson only to chip his effort wide.

The other match of the night saw Chelsea fight back to steal an injury-time 2-1 win over Queen's Park Rangers at Loftus Road.

Paul Furlong climbed at the far post to head home a Gavin Peacock cross from the left with 90 minutes already up.

Bradley Allen had given QPR the lead on 70 minutes and Chelsea looked to have missed their chance when Ruud Gullit saw a second-half shot saved on the line by Steve Yates.

Hall looks to faithful Keegan

LONDON (AFP) — Newcastle chairman Sir John Hall said on Wednesday that he believed Kevin Keegan would put club before country if he were offered the post as England manager.

Keegan, who has a contract at St. James' Park stretching well into the next century, is the people's choice to replace Terry Venables as national coach if the Football Association decide not to renew his contract for the 1998 World Cup qualifying campaign.

But Hall, speaking on BBC Radio just hours after the Magpies had stretched their Premiership lead to seven points with a 2-0 win over Arsenal, believes Keegan will want to complete the job of establishing Newcastle as Britain's — and possible Europe's — top club.

"Kevin is our manager at present, has a 10-year contract and I'm certain he's quite happy here," said Hall.

"We're just at the start of great things at Newcastle. Kevin will make his own mind up at the end of the day but I would like to think he would stay."

Hall added that he is fully aware of the speculation linking Keegan, who succeeded Ossie Ardiles as Newcastle manager in February 1992, with England.

"That will rise again if Terry Venables does not have his contract extended. There will be speculation and Kevin will always be linked, but I just hope we are allowed to get on with the job.

"I don't worry about a thing — you take life as it comes. We're businessmen and if things happen you must plan for it. But we'll meet that when it comes."

The multi-millionaire chairman, who invested over 14 million pounds ($21 million) on new talent this summer in a bid to secure Newcastle's first championship success for 69 years, is aiming to prolong the club's success well into the future.

"I'm a businessman and I'm looking towards the next 20 years. We've got to get a base like other clubs such as Manchester United. "We're getting that base and I'm looking beyond this season.

"It would be nice to win something this time — I think everyone's expecting us to do that. But we're going to be a force in football, not just this season but in the years to come.

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* TheSanta Clause
Shows: 12:30, 5:00

CINEMA CONCORD TEL: 677420
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DISCLOSURE
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6, 8:30, 10:30
CONCORD "2"
* Batman For ever
Shows: 3:30 8:30
* ASSASSINS
Shows: 6, 9:30

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Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia breathes a sigh of relief after defeating USA's Richey Reneberg 7-6 (7-2), 6-3 during their match in the Hopman Cup at Burwood Dome on Wednesday (Reuters photo)

Hopman Cup

Ivanisevic powers Croats over U.S.

PERTH (Agencies) — Goran Ivanisevic produced a double, winning both his singles and doubles matches to give top seeded Croatia a 2-1 win over United States in the Hopman Cup team tennis tournament on Wednesday.

The Croatians, with two wins in as many matches of top Group A, are followed by United States and France who have a win apiece. South Africa lost both their matches.

After struggling to beat Richey Reneberg to draw level at one match apiece, the big serving Ivanisevic partnered Iva Majoli to take the doubles encounter 6-4, 6-2.

Trailing 2-4, the Croatians came back strongly, twice breaking Rubin and Reneberg's serve before Ivanisevic held serve to win 6-4.

Ivanisevic and Majoli, both experienced doubles players, sniffing the opening, pounced on the opportunity, twice breaking the U.S. serves to win in two sets.

In the singles match Ivanisevic faced with a must win situation, following Majoli's defeat at the hands of Rubin, won 7-6, 6-3.

Ivanisevic was taken to a tie breaker in the first set that lasted 54 minutes, despite serving 15 aces. However, he won the tie breaker comfortably 7-2 and continued the form into the second set winning more convincingly 6-3.

Ivanisevic well-known for his big serves, sent down 19 aces in the match as opposed to Reneberg's five, four of them in the first set.

With the second straight defeat staring at her, the world No. 15 Rubin made a spirited recovery as she rallied back to win in straight sets against Majoli 7-5, 6-0.

Majoli got a kick start to her match racing to a 5-2 lead, breaking Rubin's serve thrice in the first set.

Rubin who lost her first outing in the tournament to South African Amanda Coetzer, bounced back immediately to break Majoli's serve and kept the momentum going claiming 11 straight games to win the tie.

In the first set Rubin 4-5, saved three set points to equal at 5 apiece and then held serve to lead 6-5.

In the deciding game she set up a break, finishing a long ralley with a brilliant cross court winner and despite a strong effort by Majoli, thrice to save match point, Rubin grabbed the second set 7-5 to win in 75 minutes.

"I started playing a lot better as the game progressed than I did at the start and I made a few less errors," Rubin said.

"The defensive part of my game has improved and I think I ran down some good balls out there today. I was hitting the ball well too."

Defending champs Germany who sprung the second upset of the tournament defeating second-seeded Netherlands, will play Australia in a Group A match in the afternoon.

Australia lost their opening match to Switzerland on the first day.

Eight teams play in two groups on a round robin basis with the two group leaders clashing in the final on Saturday.

Meanwhile little dynamo Anke Huber gave Germany an early lead over Australia in a Hopman Cup tennis Group B tie here Wednesday night.

Ranked 10th in the world, Huber, 21, beat 25-year-old Nicole Bradtke (ranked 37th) 6-3, 6-1 in only 55 minutes in the women's singles.

Germany will win the match if Huber's partner, Martin Sinner, can overcome Mark Philippoussis in the men's singles, following immediately.

Saudi soccer hero banned

RIYADH (AFP) — Said Owairan, who scored the goal of the tournament against Belgium in the 1994 World Cup finals in the United States, has been suspended for a year by his Saudi Arabian club Al Shabab.

No details were reported but Owairan has been criticised in recent months for missing training.

Prince Faisal, president of the Saudi federation, also barred Owairan from national team duties. Owairan was also ordered not to leave Saudi Arabia for a year.

Premier League enters 16th week

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Tough matches lie ahead for teams at both ends of the Kingdom's Premier League standings as the competition enters its 16th week.

Al Ahli, just out of the last four last week, take on titleholders Al Wihdat Thursday. Their first round match had ended in a 0-0 draw. Al Wihdat are now tied with Al Faisali with 29 points but are third on goal difference.

In another match on Thursday, Kufrsoum aim to improve their standing when they face 10th place Sahab. Kufrsoum enter the 16th week in 6th place after holding former champions Faisali to last-minute 2-2 draw. Kufrsoum's first round match with Sahab had ended in a 1-1 draw.

An important match will be Al Faisali's clash with Al Hussein at Amman Stadium Friday. Their first round clash had ended in goalless draw. Al Faisali are second now and hope to win the title for a record 26th time. Al Hussein are fifth after their surprising 4-1 loss to Al Ahli.

Also on Friday Al Qadissieh face Al Baqaa. Al Qadissieh had moved to fourth last week after defeating Sahab 2-0. Al Baqaa are ninth and need to improve their record to move out of the relegation zone.

The top scorers so far are:

Abdullah Shiyyab (Hussein) ...	11 goals
Ibrahim Abdul Hadi (Jalil) ...	8 goals
Bassam Khatib (Ahli) ...	7 goals
Khaled Majdalawi (Wihdat) ...	7 goals
Salim Diyabat (Ramtha) ...	7 goals
Hisham Abdul Munem (Wihdat) ...	7 goals
Mouaffaq Abu Hdeib (Ramtha) ...	7 goals
Jiryes Tadros (Faisali) ...	7 goals
Riyad Azmi (Jazireh) ...	7 goals
Murad Hasan (Jazireh) ...	6 goals
Riyad Diqes (Baqaa) ...	6 goals

Schedule of 16th week

Thurs 4/1 Wihdat Ahli ...	Amman Stadium
Thurs 4/1 Sahab-Kufrsoum ...	Salt Stadium
Fri 5/1 Faisali-Hussein ...	Amman Stadium
Fri 5/1 Qadissieh-Baqaa ...	Salt Stadium

Gullit battles for fitness

LONDON (AFP)— Ruud Gullit resumed his battle for fitness on Wednesday to be fit for Chelsea's tie-of-the-round FA Cup clash with Premiership pace-setters Newcastle on Sunday.

Manager Glenn Hoddle is concerned that the 33-year-old flying Dutchman may have to miss the titanic third round battle — and his FA Cup debut — at Stamford Bridge after being carried off on a stretcher in Tuesday's dramatic 2-1 West London derby win over QPR at Loftus Road.

Beijing unlikely to bid for 2004 Olympics

BEIJING (R) — Beijing, which lost out to Sydney in the bidding to host the 2000 Olympics, is unlikely to vie for the 2004 Games, Chinese sources said on Wednesday.

Asked if Beijing would bid for the 2004 Olympics, vice-mayor Zhang Baifa said the Chinese capital had other priorities but stopped short of announcing that Beijing had decided not to bid, a spokesman for the city government said.

"Beijing City is concentrating its energy on drawing up its ninth five year plan and drafting a development plan for 2010," the spokesman quoted the vice-mayor as saying last week.

"Regarding the Olympics, we will actively take part as in the past and actively support it," Zhang was quoted as saying.

A Chinese source close to the Beijing City government said the capital had decided not to compete for the 2004 Olympics.

"Like the women's conference... the Olympics would involve much hard work but would produce little results," said the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Beijing ran into criticism from many delegates for tight security measures, especially widespread surveillance, during the United Nations World Conference on Women in September.

Chinese sports officials said a formal announcement on whether Beijing would bid for the 2004 Olympics would be made before the January 10 deadline.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has said Beijing was not among 11 cities that have launched formal bids for the 2004 Olympics. The contenders so far are Athens, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Istanbul, Lille, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, Seville, St Petersburg, San Juan and Stockholm.

In September 1993, Beijing and its people were enraged when the city failed by just two votes in IOC balloting for the millennium Olympiad. Many saw the failed bid as a blow to national pride.

Many U.S. and European politicians and human rights activists opposed Beijing's bid, saying China did not deserve the honour until it improve its human rights record.

In China's latest bid to muzzle outspoken opinions, veteran dissident Wei Jingsheng, father of China's modern democracy movement, was jailed for 14 years last month for plotting to subvert the government.

Last May, IOC chief Juan Antonio Samaranch was quoted by official Chinese media as telling Beijing Mayor Li Qiyan the Chinese capital should try for the 2004 Olympics.

The United States is hosting the 1996 Games in Atlanta.

Players shock at McFarland sacking

LONDON (AFP) — Bolton players expressed their shock and sadness on Wednesday that joint-manager Roy McFarland had been sacked.

The former England defender was dismissed for the second time in nine months as a result of the Lancashire club's calamitous first half of the season.

McFarland teamed up with Colin Todd to form a managerial partnership in the summer, but the arrangement has not worked out with Bolton stranded eight points adrift at the bottom of the Premiership.

Midfielder Scott Sellars, who joined Wanderers only last month in an 800,000 pound ($1.2 million) move from Newcastle; said: "Everyone knows being a football manager is precarious. It's not a nice thing to happen and my thoughts are with Roy. I am disappointed for him — after all, he brought me here."

S. Africa seek glory in 1st Nations' Cup

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South Africa completes its transition from sports pariah to a leading member of the international soccer family when it hosts the African Nations' Cup finals this month.

It has taken the country just over three years from the end of the apartheid era and its enforced sporting isolation to take its place in Africa's top tournament — albeit as automatic qualifiers.

But the South Africans will be more than just hosts they stand a better than average chance of winning the title at their very first attempt.

After a hesitant start to their international footballing career in July 1992, they have developed into a more than competent team and will be among the favourites in the three-week event, being played in four venues. The final is in Johannesburg on February 3.

Controversy has already hit the tournament, with defending champions Nigeria pulling out of the tournament citing fears for the safety of their players.

South African President Nelson Mandela has campaigned for an international boycott of Nigeria following the executions in November of nine minority rights activists by the military government, in defiance of worldwide appeals for clemency.

The South Africans go into the opening game against Cameroon in Johannesburg on January 13 with a 13-match unbeaten run that includes creditable draws against former world champions Argentina and Germany and victories over leading African sides like Egypt, Ghana and Zambia.

Coach Clive Barker has nurtured the technical expertise of the South African players with large doses of self-confidence.

"There are few countries in Africa who have as much talent at their disposal as we do," Barker said.

The country's stature as a potential future African football power has also been boosted by the victory of club side Orlando Pirates in the African Champions' Cup last month.

Pirates overcame leading Ivorian team ASEC Abidjan to become the first team from the southern African region to win the continent's leading club competition — at their first attempt.

Pirates have four players in the 22-man squad for the Nations Cup. There are also seven European-based professionals but, unlike most of the other leading teams on view, South Africa's key talent is home-based.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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A NO-COST TRY

Both vulnerable. East deals.

NORTH
♠ A 9 3
♡ J 9 4
◇ 10 9 6 4
♣ A 8 2

WEST
♠ Q 10 5
♡ 7 5 2
◇ Q 7
♣ Q 9 7 5 3

EAST
♠ K
♡ A 6 3
◇ A J 5 2
♣ K J 10 6 4

SOUTH
♠ J 8 7 6 4 2
♡ K Q 10 8
◇ K 8 3
♣ Void

The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1◇	1♠	1NT	2♠
3♠	3♡	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Opening lead: Five of ♣

There are some plays that cannot cost — they stand only to gain. Who can ask for anything more?

With an aceless hand South was more than a little aggressive in introducing the heart suit and then pushing on to game. Even if North's ace of clubs were a red ace instead, it would hardly be a good game, especially since the auction marked East as being short in spades.

West led a low club and declarer, Dorothy Hayden Truscott of Riverdale, N.Y., did not like her prospects. The two red aces were sure losers, and to limit her trump losers to one she had to find either a 2-2 split or East with a singleton ten.

If trumps were 2-2, it made no difference how declarer played the hand — the contract would always be made as long as East held the ace of diamonds. To cater to the second holding, declarer had to lead the jack of spades from hand to pin the singleton ten. So declarer ruffed the club lead in hand and immediately shot back the jack of trumps.

The desired situation did not exist, but the lead of the jack of spades reaped an unexpected dividend. Afraid that playing low would cost a trick, West covered with the queen, dummy's ace was played and great was the fall thereon. Declarer had no trouble holding her losers to three.

Should West have defended as above? Switch the king of diamonds and the king of spades, and covering with the queen would be the only way to beat the hand. You be the judge.

Becker upsets Edberg's final year start

DOHA (R) — Boris Becker ended Stefan Edberg's hopes of a winning start to his final year on tour, beating the Swede 6-2 7-5 at the Qatar Open on Tuesday.

The German second seed joined top seed Thomas Muster in the second round after the Austrian French Open champion beat Spain's Javier Sanchez 6-2 7-6.

Becker raced to a 3-0 lead in the first set with two breaks before fellow former Wimbledon champion Edberg broke back to 1-3. Becker came back in the seventh game and then held serve to win the first set in 33 minutes.

The second set went with serve until Becker got the final break in the 11th game and then served out the match.

"Stefan has always been my toughest opponent. We have had major matches and we have a lot of respect for each other on court," Becker said.

Becker said that when the time came for him to quit, he would do so almost immediately and not play another year.

"I wouldn't announce it and then play for another year. When my time comes, I will quit very quickly," Becker said.

Edberg announced his retirement last month but will keep playing until the end of 1996.

Kafelnikov upsets Woodforde

ADELAIDE (AFP) — Russian top seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov snuffed out the last Australian challenge with a three-set victory over Mark Woodforde at the Australian hardcourt tennis championship here late Wednesday.

Kafelnikov, the world No. 6, ended the title hopes of home-town favourite Woodforde, winning their second round encounter 6-4, 4-6, 6-1.

Earlier, Australia's other second round survivor, Scott Draper, bowed out 6-3, 6-2 to Britain's Greg Rusedski.

Kafelnikov's potent serve was the key to his victory, wearing down the left-handed Woodforde.

The 21-year-old Russian said he was capable of repeating his 1994 title success here when he beat Alexander Volkov in the first all-Russian final in the Open era.

"I won this tournament two years ago, so why not? I'm top seed, I'm favourite, but it won't be easy," Kafelnikov said.

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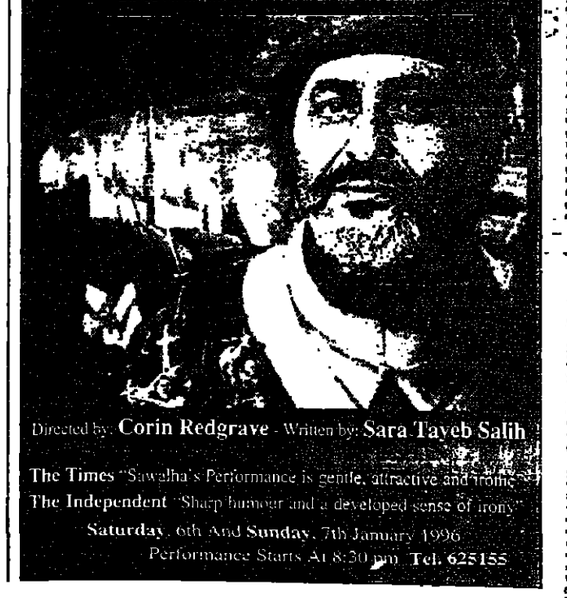

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Ciller tries to form anti-Islamist bloc

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's caretaker Prime Minister Tansu Ciller held talks with secular leaders to try to form an anti-Islamist coalition as the countdown to setting up a new government officially began Wednesday.

The Islamists emerged as the biggest party after a general election last month.

"Ciller and (Motherland party leader Mesut) Yilmaz held talks over the telephone to discuss the formation of a new government, and have agreed on more comprehensive face-to-face talks soon," a Motherland Party (ANAP) official told Reuters.

It was the first contact between the leaders since their initial agreement to spearhead an alliance to deny the Islamists power turned sour last week when Yilmaz and a leftist leader accused Ms. Ciller of hindering talks.

Ms. Ciller later held talks with Deniz Baykal, the leader of her former Social Democrat Coalition partners, her party said.

Final official results for the Dec. 24 polls announced Wednesday gave the Islamists 158 seats in parliament.

Ms. Ciller's True Path Party (DYP) got 135 and ANAP 132. Two leftist parties shared the rest of the 550 seats.

The constitution requires parliament to reconvene Monday, five days after the final results are released. President Suleyman Demirel is then expected to give one of the MPs the job of forming a new government. Traditionally the leader of the party with the most seats, in this case the Islamist Welfare Party (RP), gets the first chance.

The business world is hoping rival secular conservatives can form a coalition to block the Islamists and treat Turkey's economic ills, such as annual inflation rate of more than 80 per cent and a stumbling privatisation programme.

But longstanding mutual animosity between Ms. Ciller and Mr. Yilmaz has blocked a DYP-ANAP coalition before, and some political analysts are speculating that both leaders are also seeking out partners for possible new elections if the alliance talks fall through.

Welfare Party officials, upset at public discussion of virtually all permutations except a government including them, say their leader Necmettin Erbakan will succeed in coming to power.

"Once the job of forming a government is appropriated, I believe all obstacles (to our rule) will be overcome," RP Deputy Chairman Riza Ulucak told a news conference. "I see three or four alternatives for a government including Welfare."

RP officials, including Mr. Erbakan, have been leaning on ANAP, which includes a small nationalist-Islamist party in its ranks, to dump Ms. Ciller and ally with them.

Mr. Yilmaz, who stormed out of alliance talks with Ms. Ciller in September after Ms. Ciller's right-left coalition collapsed, has insisted that Ms. Ciller cannot be premier in any coalition with him. He has also secured the allegiance of former leftist Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, whom Ms. Ciller is reluctant to have in a coalition with her.

Mr. Ecevit, a 1970s-style leftist, opposes privatisation and closer ties with Europe — Ms. Ciller's flagship projects.

Ms. Ciller appears to be hedging her bets until Welfare has a go at forming a government. If it fails, Mr. Demirel is expected appoint her, giving her a stronger hand against Mr. Yilmaz.

An air trooper leans from a Lynx AH-7 helicopter after take off from the British base at Gornji Vakuf Wednesday. British troopers from 661 Squadron Army Air Corps provide general air support for the IFOR operation and are making their presence known to the former local warring parties. The Lynx carry 4 Tow missiles and a general purpose machine gun (Reuters photo)

NATO seeks to defuse Sarajevo abductions crisis

SARAJEVO (R) — NATO moved quickly on Wednesday to head off its first potential crisis over the abduction of 16 Muslims by separatist Serbs in Sarajevo, sending a senior commander for urgent talks with Serb officials.

General Sir Michael Walker, commander of NATO ground forces in Bosnia, met the mayor of the Serb suburb of Ilidza, Prstojevic Nedjeljko, to discuss the abductions, the first real test the NATO mission has faced since it began 13 days ago.

But a senior Bosnian government official said the Serbs were refusing to release them, in a direct challenge to NATO's pledge of freedom of movement for all, and considered them prisoners of war.

The Muslim-led Bosnian government said the 16 were seized while crossing the hard-line separatist Serb suburb of Ilidza, and has demanded that NATO protect people travelling on roads opened by alliance forces as part of the Dayton peace deal.

The French foreign ministry on Wednesday announced that three of those detained had been released by the Serbs.

But senior Bosnian government official Amir Hadziomeragic denied any had been released, saying those freed were three women who strayed into Serb territory on Tuesday and had nothing to do with the 16 Serbs were keeping.

Mr. Hadziomeragic, an aide to Minister Hasan Muratovic, said the Serbs had made clear at a meeting with government officials and NATO commanders on Wednesday they considered the 16 to be prisoners of war.

"What we have here is a clear act of terrorism," Mr. Hadziomeragic added.

The incidents coincided with the arrival in Sarajevo of U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry, the most senior U.S. administration figure to visit Bosnia since war broke out in 1992, to discuss the progress of the peace implementation force (IFOR) with NATO commanders.

Mr. Perry appeared to play down the abductions issue, saying when questioned on how it might affect IFOR's relations with civilian authorities: "There's a good, harmonious relationship...I think the relationship is firm."

"We could not be more pleased...The NATO force is on schedule," he told reporters at Sarajevo airport before flying on to Tuzla, the main U.S. base in Bosnia.

However Mr. Perry said it was important that an international peace force ordered to Sarajevo by the U.N. Security Council should be deployed "as soon as possible".

While promising that NATO would do what it could to help in the meantime, he insisted that it was not the alliance's job to be a police force.

The Dayton peace accord does authorise the alliance to ensure freedom of movement for civilians, but officials said the heavily-armed elite force was ill-equipped to deal with small-scale obstructions, though they can be disruptive.

Military officials and diplomats say part of the problem is that while NATO has forged ahead with deploying IFOR, the civilian planning and structure has lagged, leaving something of a vacuum.

International coordinator Carl Bildt is responsible for non-military issues, backed by an international police force of 1,500 which is due to be deployed, mainly in Sarajevo, but no date has been set for their arrival.

Mr. Bildt was quoted in the Stockholm press on wednesday as blaming the delay in establishing a civilian structure in Bosnia on lack of funds, saying that so far only the European Union (EU) had pledged any money.

In Washington a State Department spokesman, Glyn Davies, acknowledged that the process of forming a new Bosnia police force was not far developed, but denied his comments were critical of Mr. Bildt.

However a U.S. official who declined to be named said on Tuesday: "We were concerned that things were going a little slowly."

Mr. Bildt, in an interview with the Swedish evening daily Expressen, said: "I understand and welcome the criticism. I've been begging for people and resources. This criticism helps me with my job."

Turkey to brief Arabs, West on water dispute with Syria

ANKARA (R) — Turkey said on Wednesday it would put its side of a row with neighbouring Syria over the waters of the Euphrates River to Arab states and Western allies this week.

"We will give information on our position to the representatives in Ankara of Arab countries and Western countries with a direct interest in the issue," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Omer Akbel told a news conference.

The foreign ministers of Egypt and six Gulf Arab states meeting in Damascus last week said Turkey was building dams on the Euphrates without consulting Iraq and Syria, through which the river flows.

Syria has strongly criticised Ankara's multi-billion-dollar plan for building dams on the river, saying this has led to a sharp decline in the flow of water to Syria which uses it for drinking and irrigation.

Turkey sent a letter to the Syrian foreign ministry last week to deny the charges.

Syrian protests have grown since November when Ankara announced a finance agreement for a fourth dam on the Euphrates, designed to produce power and irrigation water for southeastern Turkey.

German, Belgian, French and Austrian firms are part of an international consortium financing the new Birecik Dam and power plant costing $1.62 billion.

Ankara and Damascus signed a provisional accord in 1987 under which Turkey allows the flow of 500 cubic metres of water per second to its downstream neighbour. Syria has called for a permanent water-sharing agreement.

But Ankara, which accuses Damascus of backing Kurdish rebels fighting for an independent homeland in southeastern Turkey, has been cool to the Syrian demand.

Deposed emir ridicules Qatari FM

KUWAIT (R) — Deposed Qatari Emir Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani criticised a recent chill in relations between his country and its Gulf allies and said Qatar's foreign minister was ignoble, a Kuwaiti daily reported Wednesday.

"I do not think that he (Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al Thani) is a man of value or a man with a brain, nor do I think he has anything noble in him," the English-language Kuwait Times quoted Sheikh Khalifa as saying in a meeting with Kuwaiti newspaper editors earlier this week.

Sheikh Khalifa, who visited Kuwait on Saturday and Sunday for private meetings with senior officials, criticised as a "joke" the increasing sympathy for Iraq he said had been shown by Qatar since he was ousted by his son, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, in June 1995, the newspapers said.

Sheikh Khalifa reiterated a pledge to return to power and to bridge gaps with fellow member states of the six-country Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Kuwait Times, Al Qabas, the Arab Times and Al Seyassah reported.

The GCC is a political, economic and military alliance grouping Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

Differences between Qatar and fellow GCC states rose to the surface in December when Sheikh Hamad refused to attend the closing session of the annual GCC summit in Oman.

"I am not only optimistic, I am sure (of regaining power)," the newspapers quoted Sheikh Khalifa as saying.

Asked why he was so confident of returning, Sheikh Khalifa was quoted as replying: "Every leader has his own secrets and the return date is in the hands of the Almighty."

"Sheikh Khalifa said Qatar's position in the GCC summit in Muscat would cause friction within the GCC, a matter that no sane person would accept," said Al Qabas newspaper.

Sheikh Khalifa started a tour of Gulf Arab states to rally support for his return after the Qatari walkout.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have been displeased with Qatar's evident sympathy for the Iraqi government since Sheikh Hamad took power, diplomats say. Iraq is under strict economic sanctions imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Saudi prince receives citizens as new era starts

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia's crown prince, holding the reins of power while King Fahd recovers from a stroke, received scores of citizens as the kingdom on Wednesday started what Western diplomats termed a period of transition.

Under the Saudi tradition of open house, citizens often present their leaders with petitions or details of their grievances.

"This is a period of transition but you will not see reorganisation," one diplomat said of Crown Prince Abdullah's official taking over the running of the world's largest oil exporter and producer upon King Fahd's request on Monday.

The king, 73, asked his half-brother Abdullah, about a year his junior, to run the country so he could get an unspecified period of rest after suffering a stroke in November.

The king did not abdicate. He indicated that the move could be temporary although many diplomats doubt the monarch would recover to the extent of resuming his hands-on style of rule.

The heir has said he would consult the king when needed.

"I would assume there will be a transition period until he gets up to speed and to grips with his new duties," another diplomat in Riyadh said.

Diplomats said ambassadors of Riyadh's key Arab, Western and other allies were expected to start calling on the crown prince in the next few days.

The crown prince, also head of the 57,000-strong well-armed national guards, received key backing on Tuesday from the kingdom's main Western ally, the United States, which said Saudi Arabia is "in good and stable hands".

Some diplomats in the kingdom said they doubted the crown prince would change core Saudi policies or make a cabinet change while the king is still alive. King Fahd in August changed the cabinet in the first major shake-up in the kingdom since 1975.

"King Fahd is still head of state and as long as he lives Abdullah will not make major changes," one said. "Even when he becomes king general policies will stay although you could see a change in style."

The king's move was seen by many analysts as consolidation of the crown prince's position within the royal family, ensuring his smooth ascension to the throne and assuring the outside world of Saudi Arabia's stability.

Any instability or major changes in Riyadh, which pumps about eight million barrels of oil per day and exports seven million of it, have traditionally had swift effects on oil prices, and energy import bills of oil-consuming countries.

Its stability is also crucial for many Western allies, especially the United States which has tens of billions of dollars worth of arms and commercial contracts with Saudi Arabia, creating tens of thousands of American jobs.

Some diplomats say the crown prince, who only has half-brothers within the family, will use the coming period to further consolidate his power within the royal family and the country in general.

They say strategic and key decisions in Saudi Arabia are generally made after a consensus within the royal family is reached. King Fahd and his six full brothers traditionally have an important say in such decisions, they added.

One described the crown prince's added duties as "chairman of a board with very active members who have to be pleased."

An expert on Saudi Arabia said the king's decision showed he "is a secure individual who trusts Abdullah and his ability to rule. How many leaders in the Arab World could (safely) take a similar step?"

Earlier in the week, Saudi daily Al Youm said the move "safeguards the security of the nation" and shows the king's keeness "to safeguard the country politically in case he is faced by a medical circumstance like the one he is passing through..."

Lebanese troops hunt suspected killer in camp

SIDON (R) — Lebanese troops surrounded south Lebanon's largest Palestinian refugee camp on Wednesday in a bid to catch a militant leader believed linked to the murder of a pro-Syrian Islamist cleric, security sources said.

They said troops had orders to arrest Palestinian Ahmed Abdul Karim Saadi, chief of the small radical group Esbat Al Ansar which is accused of being behind the August killing of Sheikh Nizar Al Halabi, head of the pro-Syrian Ahbash group.

The sources said troops threw up sand barricades to block scores of small alleys leading into the sprawling Ain El Hilweh camp near the southern port of Sidon.

The troops searched cars and motorists and checked people going in and out of the camp through three main entrances left open, the sources added.

But they said there were no signs that the troops, who are usually stationed near Ain El Hilweh, intend to enter the camp, home to 75,000 refugees 40 kilometres south of Beirut.

Dozens of Palestinian factions are based in the camp where no Lebanese soldiers have set foot since 1968.

Palestinian sources said they doubted Mr. Saadi, known by the name Abu Mohjen, was inside the camp but Lebanese security sources said it was hard for him to have slipped through the heavy Lebanese army checkpoints.

U.S. company offers to upgrade Turkish F-5s

ANKARA (AFP) — U.S. company Triton Systems, conducting Turkey's project to modernise its aging F-5 fighter aircraft, has asked Ankara to approve two new partners, France's Aerospatiale and Israel's Elbit, to take part in the operation, company and Turkish officials said Wednesday.

A Triton Systems official in Washington told AFP by telephone that the company had reached agreement with Aerospatiale and Elbit to replace U.S. firm Northrop Grumman in carrying out the project.

Northrop Grumman, original producer of the F-5s, was initially involved in the deal, but later withdrew. Aerospatiale is now to be involved as the prime contractor, and Elbit is to upgrade Avionics systems.

A Turkish government official told AFP that the undersecretariat of Defence Industries received the proposal last week and would probably announce a decision next month.

The nearly $150 million project covers the upgrading of 70 aircraft. The turkish air force is set to use 34 of the modernised F-5s, while the remaining 36 planes are to be sold after being upgraded to cover the cost of the process.

The Triton Systems official said there was an agreement in principle with the Philippines, which wants to buy 24 of the planes.

COLUMN

Taiwan lovers plan bathroom nuptials

TAIPEI (R) — A Taiwan couple plans to marry in a luxurious $1 million public bathroom that they built themselves, the China Post newspaper has reported. The pair and five other couples will marry in the bathroom, lavishly decorated and located in a park in central Taiwan, on Jan. 14 in the hope of setting a world record for a mass bathroom wedding, the newspaper reported. It said the groom and bride, Lee Wang-Feng and Chiu Chin-Kuei, had designed and built the bathroom. Lee and Chiu said they wanted to marry in a bathroom because it is a room everyone visits often.

Argentine mayor hides in toilets for 15 hours

BUENOS AIRES (R) — An Argentine provincial mayor had to lock himself in the town hall toilets for 15 hours to escape rioters angered by his plans to fire 120 municipal workers, local media have reported. After being rescued by police, Mayor Alejandro Quintieron told the private DYN news agency he had been in the toilets "from six in the morning until nine at night because they wanted to kill me." Mr. Quintieron said that over one in 10 of the 6,500 inhabitants of the town of Milagros in La Rioja province is a municipal employee.

Star forced to cancel opening night

MILAN, Italy (AFP) — Veteran actor Marcello Mastroianni has been forced to delay the opening night of his new play here after suffering kidney pains, the Teatro Nuovo said Wednesday. Mr. Mastroianni, 71, was due to take the starring role in "The Last Moons" by Italian Furio Bordon, which has taken theatres across Italy by storm, in which he plays an elderly man who continues to speak to his dead wife. But he was forced to put back the Jan. 8 start for treatment at a Paris clinic, the theatre said. The play is now set to open on Jan. 23.

British royal family cut foreign trips by a third

LONDON (AFP) — Members of the British royal family cut their trips abroad by a third last year, the Times has reported. Basing its calculations on the daily court circular, the paper said the 14 leading royals went abroad a total of 977 times in 1995, compared with more than 1,500 in 1994. Queen Elizabeth, her husband the Duke of Edinburgh and their son Prince Charles reduced their total engagements abroad from 698 to 462, but compensated by carrying out more than 1,500 engagements in Britain, 25 per cent more than in 1994. Only Princess Diana considerably increased her trips abroad in 1995, from eight to 65.

Ronald Biggs cashes in on train robbery image

NEW YORK (R) — British fugitive Ronald Biggs makes money by marketing himself as one of the great train robbers and has become a tourist attraction in Brazil, the New York Times said. Mr. Biggs, 66, told the paper in an interview from Rio de Janeiro that he hosted barbecues for tourists at $50 a ticket and was invited to parties where he provided entertainment because of his role in the robbery.